

SERMONS:

TO WHICH ARE SUBJOINED,

SUITABLE HYMNS.



BY

EDMUND BUTCHER.

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PREFATORY ADDRESS.

TO THE
CONGREGATION OF PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,
ASSEMBLING FOR

PUBLIC WORSHIP IN LEATHER-LANE, HOLBORN.

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

THOUGH separated from you in the course of Providence, yet in my distant abode I still retain a grateful recollection of former friendship, and an ardent wish for your eternal welfare and happiness,

As a testimony of this regard, and in compliance with the wishes of several of your number, I present you with this Volume, the publication of which has been delayed far beyond my expectations. The discourses it contains
were

were originally drawn up for your use, and delivered in your PULPIT: they were heard with attention, and will now, I hope, be perused with candour and improvement.

You will easily recognize in these Sermons the general strain of my preaching—in this more permanent form, I trust they will assist in kindling, and perpetuating those sentiments of virtue and piety which it was my invariable object to inculcate. Such sentiments, however unfashionable in a thoughtless world, are necessary to the true enjoyment of life; and essential to your preparation for Heaven.

These Discourses being intended principally for the use of families, it may be remarked, that where it can be practised, singing should always constitute a part of family worship. It is a cheerful branch of devotion, and peculiarly acceptable to young minds. To render it most useful, it is desirable that what is sung should be in unison with what has been read. To provide for this union I have subjoined to this Volume a set of HYMNS, composed expressly

pressly for this end. I pray God that these poetical epitomes, may be instrumental in fixing upon the memory the leading ideas of the discourse to which each belongs. On this account it would be adviseable to read the Hymn, even where it cannot be sung.

And now, my dear and honoured friends, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace. Converse much with that best of all books the BIBLE. Pray for a blessing upon every portion you read. Examine frequently, and fairly, your own hearts. Be constant and affectionate in your attendance upon the labours of my respected BROTHER, whom you have chosen to be your Pastor in the Lord. Under his faithful ministrations, may you abound in every good word and work! May the God of all wisdom and consolation direct and comfort you in life, support you in the trying hour of death, and be your eternal portion in a better world!

To my other numerous and respectable SUBSCRIBERS, you will here permit me to return
my

my most cordial thanks, for the liberal countenance with which they also have honoured this Volume. May grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father, and from Jesus Christ our Lord, be your and their final reward!

These, my ever-respected fellow-christians, are the sincere prayers, and fervent wishes, of your affectionate friend and former pastor,

EDMUND BUTCHER,

SIDBURY, DEVON,

DEC. 1, 1798.

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SERMONS.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ON MEDITATION.

GENESIS XXIV. 63.

*And Isaac went out to meditate in the Field
at Even-tide.*

HOW amiable and respectable does the character of Isaac appear! Towards the close of day, this excellent young man retires from the bustle of business, to hold converse with his own heart in the grateful solitude of a neighbouring field. We are not told what particular subjects occupied his thoughts, it would therefore be trifling if not impertinent to hazard any conjectures about them: only we may

B remark,

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I.
remark, in general, that considering the manner in which the fact is recorded, and the circumstances of Isaac at this particular juncture, we are warranted in supposing that he was engaged in a serious and manly, if not absolutely in a devout manner.

He had recently lost an affectionate parent; the age of his father was great; and he knew that one of his principal domestics was gone upon an errand, which might, in a great measure, determine the happiness of his own life. He knew he was the son of promise, his life had once been miraculously preserved, and from all the particulars recorded of him, he appears to have been a serious, reflecting, and pious character. From all these things we may conclude that when the sacred historian informs us that, *at even-tide, Isaac went into the field to meditate*, he meant to insinuate that he was employed in a manner suitable to the best signification of that word. For such an employment, the tranquillity of the country, and the *cool of the day*, in an eastern climate, are particularly

particularly calculated. In what an especial manner does this beautiful example claim the attention of the young! An evening walk in a pleasant season, how grateful is it! Improved as Isaac improved it, how valuable and advantageous might it be made! I do not mean that every walk should be solitary. The young heart glows at the name of friend, and rejoices in the communication of its delights. When these delights are of the improving kind, such an intercourse is one of the sweetest cordials of humanity.

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To retire sometimes, however, is both useful and agreeable. Solitude, properly employed, fits us for engaging with double effect in the intercourse of common life. It new nerves the soul, adds vigour to the mental powers, gives a relish to every domestic enjoyment, brightens the eye of affection, sweetens the smile of sympathy, and diffuses an animation through the whole circle of social communications and duties. Add to this, solitude, when properly sought for, and moderately indulged, may be so managed as to be the noblest society. Then we can take the

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I.

best views of our own character; then we can survey, in the most useful manner, our relative situation; then we can hold the most improving and delightful intercourse with our God.

To reflect and meditate is the prerogative of human nature: the animals about us cannot do it, and if we neglect it, we are chargeable with the crime of wrapping one of our best talents in a napkin. Indeed it is impossible not to think; it is therefore a matter of the highest importance, that we give our thoughts a proper direction, and furnish them with materials on which they may speculate with advantage. This will be found an excellent preservative of our virtue, and a constant spring of cheerfulness and satisfaction. The objects of this discourse will be, to furnish the mind with some proper subjects for meditation, and briefly to shew the advantages which will result from having our thoughts habitually well directed.

I. Think frequently and seriously on the being and perfections of God. The mind of man is so formed as to feel a pleasure in
contemplating

contemplating sublime and magnificent images. It delights to expatiate amidst the wonders of creation, and make excursions far above "the visible diurnal sphere." This is a very noble and extensive field; but, far beyond all its wonders, veiled in impenetrable darkness, or blazing with unapproachable glory, is the essence of the Great Supreme. Upon this the curiosity of the human mind has been busied for ages, but this is not its proper study. The essence of JEHOVAH no created eye can see, and every attempt to explain it must prove nugatory. *Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is higher than heaven, what can we do? It is deeper than the abyss, what can we know?* To adore his majesty, and bow to his sceptre, is our province; to investigate his nature, and explain his essence, we have neither ability nor claim. Concerning his attributes we can arrive at some clearer notions. We can form ideas of wisdom and power, of rectitude and goodness; we can assemble in our minds images of every

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I.



thing which is excellent and lovely; we can add eternity and immutability to every perfection, but here we must stop. Humanity can arrive no nearer the Creator than this: but let us ask our own hearts, is not this near enough for every moral purpose? Is not such a Deity as this a worthy and glorious subject of contemplation? If we frequently indulge it, it will have the happiest influence on our character and conduct. Our minds will be led into a frame somewhat corresponding with the just and honourable views we shall form of God. We shall be induced, with the utmost composure, to commit ourselves to him in the way of well doing. We shall acquire virtuous habits, and in the exercise of humility and dependence, experience a serene joy which will be the best preparative for a higher and better state of existence.

II. The works of God will afford us an ample fund of rational and delightful meditation. To the curious enquirer, every part of nature affords a large field
for

for examination and delight. A thousand properties and combinations of matter which escape the notice of a common eye, display to the inquisitive search of philosophy the wonderful works of God. The chemist, the botanist, and the astronomer, the students in the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms of nature, have each of them a world of wonders to explore. In each of these kingdoms, if religion take them by the hand, an altar of gratitude and astonishment will be erected to the Author of all things. Every mine will be a temple; every field will be an oratory. But that we may improve, to the great purposes of devotion and holiness, the works of the Creator, it is by no means necessary that we have a scientific acquaintance with them. The general scenery of nature, so admirably calculated both to strike and charm, is open to every eye: its most important and useful properties are level to every understanding. The mechanic who is utterly ignorant of the philosophy of his materials, can apply them to the

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I.


grand purposes of life. The husbandman who never analyzed his land, can drop his seed into the furrow, can pray for a blessing on his labours, and can reap the produce.

Millions of individuals who know little or nothing of the properties of the plants and flowers which, year after year, bloom around them, can gaze with transport on their brilliant colours, can enjoy the variety of their fragrance, and bless the hand which gave them to our world. To feel the beauty of a natural landscape, it is by no means necessary to be able to delineate the scene. To admire the magnificence of the starry heavens, to be convinced of the splendor and usefulness of the sun, it is by no means necessary to be acquainted with the system of Copernicus, or to possess the astronomical knowledge of a Newton. The bountiful Donor of the universe has not locked up his gifts: and, be it remembered, that for those gifts, a sensible, grateful heart is the noblest return. This, meditation will be one means of giving. Frequent reflection will teach us more powerfully

powerfully to feel the value of our mercies; we shall discover more of their worth, and if we have any generosity of mind, our gratitude, obedience, and piety, will keep some pace with our enlarged information.

SERM.

I.

III. The history of past ages, particularly scripture history, will furnish us with materials for meditation of the most amusing, and improving kind. In this we shall trace some outlines of the divine government. We shall see the plan of Providence gradually unfolding itself from its infant dawn, in the patriarchal ages, to its full meridian in the christian dispensation. We shall discover how, amidst the general and murky darkness which overspread the nations; amidst the storms which convulsed the natural and moral worlds, the small taper of divine knowledge was kept alive. In the promotion of this great design we shall see with astonishment, how many apparently fortuitous, and even adverse circumstances were made to conspire. For this, Abraham must leave his native country,

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I.

try, and Jacob become a sojourner in the land of Goshen. To fix this knowledge upon the hearts of his descendants, the slavery of Egypt was a preparatory step. For this, the thunders of Sinai, the wanderings in the desert, and the conquest of Canaan, were all necessary. To secure this, the temple was erected, prophets raised up, and the captivity of Babylon appointed. To complete this glorious design, and prove that the God of ALL is *no respecter of persons*, the Jews returned to their own land, and Jesus of Nazareth lived and died. What a chain of wonders is here exhibited! What variety of character! What miracles of mercy! What monuments of justice! What triumphs of divine wisdom! What abasements of human pride does this important and eventful history contain!

To crown the whole, in the character of the Saviour of the World, a pure and perfect example of every excellence is held up. Here we behold a teacher of righteousness, whose precepts have no defect, and whose life had no stain. We behold him
loving

loving a degenerate world, *even unto the end*, and giving up himself *a ransom* for it.

The blind prejudices of his countrymen *rejected the counsel of God against themselves*, and crucified the *Lord of Glory*.

He was laid in the grave, but the grave could not detain him long. He burst the gates of death, and rose a pledge, and a pattern of that resurrection which he has promised to his faithful followers. Can we meditate upon his character too much? Can we read the register of his actions too frequently? Can we imbibe too large a portion of his spirit? Let us not be afraid of exhausting the subject. Let us think of it as we ought to-day, and to-morrow we shall wish to recal it to our minds. That which eternity will never fully disclose, cannot, surely, be thought too narrow a subject for the reflections of time.

If to all this we add the consideration, that the Word of God is the great directory of our conduct, the foundation of our best comfort, and the grand repository of our future hopes; and also, that its instructions, and discoveries will be of no use to
us,

SERM. us, except they are so remembered as to
I. influence our practice; we shall have motives to meditation, which we shall be ashamed to dispute, and, I hope, too sensible of our own interest to renounce.

IV. We should meditate frequently, and fairly, on our own characters. We should carefully look back on the path we have trodden, and impartially examine our conduct. In every human bosom God has erected a tribunal, and before that, it is our duty, and will be our advantage often to appear. If Isaac were employed in this manner *in the even-tide*, his example is peculiarly worthy our imitation. Did we every night, deliberately ask, and, as in the sight of God, honestly answer such questions as the following, I am persuaded we should find it an advantageous, and, in time a delightful practice: "Have I, in the course of this day, felt that reverence for the majesty, and purity of God, which those attributes of the divine nature require? Have I received mercies, and been thankful? Have I avoided dangerous, and
ensnaring

ensnaring company? Have I set a guard both upon my thoughts, and my lips? Have I considered myself as the whole of this day under the immediate notice of my Maker? Have I performed my duty to those with whom I have been connected? Have I been upright, and kind in all my behaviour? Have I been temperate, and chaste? Has the language of truth dwelt upon my lips, and the law of kindness ruled in my heart? Am I closing the day in a proper temper of mind? Have I laid aside all wrath, and malice? Have I cordially forgiven every injury which has been done me? Have I remembered my Saviour with gratitude, and obedience? Should the bed on which I am now lying down, prove the bed of death, am I prepared, and willing to appear at the bar of Heaven?"

SERM.

I.

Such questions as these, at the close of every day, should be put to our souls. If they are regularly put, and honestly answered, by the blessing of divine grace, they will soon be answered well. It is not in human nature to bear constant reproach; therefore

SERM. therefore I may venture to assert, that
 I. serious self-examination, and a bad conduct
 will not long subsist together.

V. We ought frequently to meditate on our future prospects, and that, both for time, and eternity. The doctrine of Providence, which is designed for the comfort of the humble, and pious, lays no foundation for carelessness, and inattention. We are not to stretch ourselves on the bed of sloth, and expect that the ravens of Elijah will be commissioned to feed us. We are not so to forget the cares of to-morrow, as to make no prudent provision for its certain necessities: this is *tempting*, and not *trusting* the goodness of God. Though we are not to rely for comfort, or protection upon ourselves, yet we are to *build the house and set the watch*. We are to look before us, as far as we can, and to leave nothing out of our plans, but anxiety, and distrust.

Permit me to add, it is of the utmost importance to meditate frequently, and seriously upon that futurity which lies
 beyond

beyond the grave. "When I approach the confines of death, in what condition is my soul likely to be found? Should I be now summoned to enter the dark valley, how am I prepared for the journey; and what reception am I likely to meet with at its close? After death, inspiration has assured me, judgment will come: In that august court I must appear; can I be too careful in my preparation to appear with safety, and honour? Shall I not meditate on such a subject? Shall I not do my best, and be unwearied in my applications for the assistance of divine grace, to rectify what is wrong, and to support, and perfect whatever is right? The consequences of my appearance at the heavenly tribunal will be unspeakably momentous. A happiness, or misery, which admits of no adequate description, will follow an impartial enquiry, and a righteous sentence. The time of my probation is short, and precarious. Every moment, therefore, is inconceivably precious; for on every moment, ETERNITY is in some measure suspended. On such subjects as these shall I not think? Then let me not dare to think

SERM. think on any other! A thoughtless immortal!
 I. there's a solecism in the sound! A careless
 christian! there's destruction in the character."

Several subjects for meditation have now been suggested. The being, and perfections of God have been mentioned. We have had the beauty of his works, and the order of his government proposed to us. The worthies of the Old Testament have been called up to our remembrance; and we have paused, for a few moments, upon the exalted character of *Jesus* in the New. A deliberate survey of our past lives has been recommended; and an honest examination of our conduct, not as the work of one or two *solemn* and *distant* periods, but as a necessary part of every day's meditation. Finally, we have been urged to look forward, and to fix our thoughts, with habitual steadiness upon the moment of separation from this world, and upon those awful scenes which lie beyond it.

I shall point out a few of the advantages which may be expected from serious meditation, and close this discourse.

1. It

1. It will dispose us for praying in a proper frame. By serious habitual meditation, we shall gain a closer acquaintance with ourselves. We shall feel our wants, become sensible of our frailties, and with suitable dispositions of mind, be inclined to throw ourselves at the foot of the divine throne. By this means we shall gain more honourable, and encouraging views of the divine majesty. We shall see him, as he really is, the wise, and tender, the impartial, and affectionate parent of the universe. We shall approach him, not with a servile, and slavish homage, but with the grateful tribute of a filial heart.

2. It will enable us, by divine aid, to read the Scriptures with advantage and improvement. We shall perceive the fullness, and excellence of the divine word. We shall find that it contains treasures of wisdom, and knowledge no where else to be met with. We shall become intimately acquainted with its contents, and the more we know them, the more we shall feel their value, and the deeper shall we drink of their consolation. The language of the pious

C

Psalmist

SERM.

I.

Psalmist will be ours, I understand more than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

3. Habits of reflection will render us better members of society. He who never considers his conduct, is, to use the simile of *Jude, a cloud without water*. He is blown about in every direction, and even if he rests for a time in any one place, he has no waters of grace, or usefulness in him, to render his stay either desirable or profitable. How different from this, is the man who comes into the world with serious, and habitual reflection? He not only begins his day with God, but frequently, in the course of it, breathes a pious ejaculation towards heaven. Though *diligent in business*, he is *servent in spirit*, and amidst his necessary and daily occupations, holds converse with his Maker. How dignified, and serene

ferene will be the conduct of such a character! The circles in which he moves will be blessed by his presence. The relatives with whom he is connected will be proud, and happy in his esteem. The church to which he belongs will be edified by his example. To such a character, life will be usefulness, death will be triumph, and eternity will be glory.

SERM.

I.

4. Habitual meditation will tend to render us contented with our present lot, and cheerful from our future prospects. We shall be able to perceive every argument which bears upon our circumstances. If they are prosperous, reflection will teach us that we ought not, therefore, to be proud. That we have no claim, upon the score of merit, to our mercies. That we may be stripped of our enjoyments: and that, while they are continued, we are accountable to the Great Giver for the manner in which they are used. If our present circumstances are not so comfortable as those of many about us, a little reflection will convince us that we have still much more than we deserve. That

SERM. numbers are more unfavourably situated.

I.

That it is possible, prosperity might have corrupted our hearts, and proved a snare to us. That life is, at longest, but short; and that sanctified troubles will work out for those who are exercised with them, *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Habits of reflection will frequently carry us beyond the present transitory, and changing world, to those everlasting abodes of purity, and bliss, for which the formation, and exercise of this habit will be such excellent preparatives.

God grant that we may think, and live to his glory in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON II.

ON DILIGENCE IN BUSINESS.

ECCLESIASTES IX. 10.

*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it
with thy might.*

WITHOUT attending to the connection in which these words are placed by Solomon, I shall use them as a motto, and introduction, to a discourse upon *diligence in business, and the views with which it should be conducted.*

SERM.
II.

That man was not sent into the world to be idle, every thing about him demonstrates. A degree of labour is necessary to render useful to us the articles of nourishment, and support. Even those who, by the abundance of their wealth, have no occasion to do any thing to secure the

SERM.
II.


supplies, or even the elegancies of life, yet these persons, if they will be clean, and healthy (to say nothing of the furniture of their minds) must employ a considerable degree of *personal activity*, and exertion. Happy, indeed, is it, both for themselves, and others, that the necessity of diligence is, in almost all cases, greater than that which has been just supposed. There are, comparatively, very few, who are not obliged to put forth all their capacities, either of body, or mind, to render themselves, and their families comfortable. The munificence, and wisdom of Heaven are as conspicuous in what is withheld, as in what is bestowed upon us. If God had intended us for drones, he would either have made us different from what we are, or he would have supplied us with accommodations in a different way: but, blessed be his name, he had more love for us than this. He did not intend that the noble energies of man should have nothing to call them into exercise, nor has he confined us within the narrow limits of instinct. From age to age, the beaver constructs its wonderful habitation;

habitation; the bees, and the birds, their commodious, and beautiful nests, and palaces, in the same unvarying manner. The mind of man is fitted for a wider range. Reflection, and contrivance belong to him. He proceeds upon general principles, and, therefore, before he makes his efforts, he can calculate the success of many of them. If defects appear, a remedy will soon occur, and thus experience, reason, and foresight going hand in hand, his advances, and improvements are proportionably extensive.

All this, however, supposes exertion, and diligence. The raw materials are abundantly put into our hands, but except our labour, and thought are employed about them, the raw materials will do us no good. The most insignificant object cannot be produced without mental, and bodily exertion. Our daily food cannot be procured without a large expence of time, labour, and ingenuity. To instance only in bread, what a variety of hands, and processes, does it go through, from the

SERM.

II.

SERM.

II.

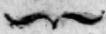
time it is sown, a grain in the field, to the moment when, in the form of bread, it is placed upon our tables? Every child can tell that the plainest rudiments of knowledge, the mere letters, and words in which we afterwards express our thoughts, and point out the means of improvement, are attained, only with great difficulty, and after numerous unsuccessful efforts. If, therefore, the simplest purposes cannot be effected without great application, and perseverance, how much more are they necessary in the attainment of great, and complicated ends. It were easy to enlarge here, but I hasten to shew what diligence is; its advantages; and what are the chief views with which it should be exerted.

Diligence is the *proper* exertion of those faculties of mind, and body, with which it has pleased our Maker to furnish us. When I say *proper*, I mean that it is the just medium between idleness on the one hand, and unreasonable slavish exertion, on the other. Diligence is an uniform habitual principle; it does not operate by fits,

fits, and starts; it is not to-day engaged in exertions fitted to exhaust a machine of iron, and to-morrow abandoned to inactivity, and sloth; it is the fair, daily application of mental, and bodily strength, in the discharge of those duties of life which belong to the station we occupy in society. The Apostle has happily defined it, *not slothful in business*. Experience has again and again demonstrated, that though this uniform activity, in a short space of time, will not produce so much as some unnatural and extraordinary efforts, yet it is of infinitely more service in the common routine of life, because, in the end, it will always produce more. Violence of any kind must necessarily be short. If a man labours beyond his strength to-day, to-morrow he will do little, or nothing.

Numerous, indeed, are the advantages of habitual diligence. Our Maker designed us for activity, and he has taken care that we shall not counteract his design with impunity. We may, if we please, I mean some of us, suffer our minds, and
bodies

SERM.

II.


bodies to rust in idleness, without incurring beggary as the consequence; but if we expect to be easy, and happy at the same time, we shall be miserably disappointed. Idleness is the hot-bed of temptation, the cradle of disease, and the canker-worm of felicity. In a little time, to the man who has no employment, life will have no novelty, and when novelty is laid in the grave, the funeral of comfort will enter the church-yard. From that moment it is the shade, and not the man, who creeps along the path of mortality. On the contrary, what solid satisfaction does the man of diligence possess? What health in his countenance? What strength in his limbs? What vigour in his understanding? With what a zest does he relish the refreshments of the day? With what pleasure does he seek the bed of repose at night? It is not the accidental hardness of a pillow that can make him unhappy, and rob him of sleep. He earns his maintenance, and he enjoys it. He has faithfully laboured in the day, and the slumbers of the night are
a sweet

a sweet retribution to him. To the diligent man every day is a little life, and every night is a little heaven. The toil has been honest, and the reward is sure.

SERM.

II.

Self-possession is the portion of the diligent man. He is at his proper post, and he knows what he is about. His business, perhaps, is arduous, but it is well planned. It is not a wilderness, but a garden which he treads in. He has many things to do, but he has the patience, and good sense to do only *one* at a time, and, by that means, neither his mind, nor his hands are thrown into confusion. In the course of life, difficulties must be expected. In this respect the lot of all is pretty equal; but what an amazing difference does it make whether we sink under, or bravely encounter them? The man of idleness has nothing to oppose to trouble, the man of temporary exertion will be frequently off his guard; but the man of steady diligence is always prepared; difficulties will attack, but they cannot surprise him.

Except in some peculiarly embittering
circumstances,

SERM.
II.

circumstances, cheerfulness will be the companion of diligence. The man of sloth is always uneasy, because he either has nothing to do, or what he has to accomplish appears insurmountable. The habitually diligent man is always at ease, because he is not the slave, but the master of his circumstances: he is ready, and careful to perform his task, and neither God, nor man requires more.

Man, says Job, is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards, and diligence will not preserve us from a share in the common calamities of life; but, next to religion, it will prove the best remedy against grief. It is virtue, it is piety then, even in situations of affliction, and bereavement, to follow with diligence our usual, and proper business. The consolations of religion find the readiest access to that heart, which does not suppose that it has a right to be angry with the divine dispensations; or that when one object of delight is removed, that it has no duties to perform to others. The union of diligence in business,

ness, with fervour, and resignation of spirit, is that which completes the disciple of Christ.

SERM.

II.

Such, my christian friends, is diligence, and such are a few of the numerous advantages with which it is attended. I pass on to lay before you a brief sketch of the views with which diligence in business ought to be exerted. You will anticipate me in the first I shall mention, it is

1. That we may secure a proper, and reasonable degree of independence. By independence, I mean not such a share of wealth as may enable us to spend our time in idleness, and vice, and become the corruptors of ourselves, and those about us; but, that from the fountain of our own industry, we may provide for our families what is necessary to their comfort, and suitable to their station in the world. Far be it from me to suppose that only rich drones can be independent. The virtuous, diligent artizan, who lives, from week to week, by the labour of his hands, is as truly independent, nay more so, than the

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the proudest, richest idler that ever existed. Only let them be placed in circumstances of equal distress, and it would soon appear who was most able to provide for himself. He who can do this best, is the most independent man. The grand object in the formation of society, should be the general advantage of its members; and, therefore, no man with health, strength, and understanding, is warranted in throwing himself as a burden upon it. Where all are to be benefited, all should assist, and therefore, with this view diligence in business ought to be practised.

Our families have wants as well as ourselves. If they are distressed, and miserable, it is impossible we can be happy. Prudence, and justice must be consulted in those immediate supplies which we afford them. The present moment should not be allowed to swallow up all our income: nor should we live, either in ourselves or families, above, or below that rank which we occupy in society. The unavoidable running expences of an household (especially in such times as these) are great; and
if

if possible, we ought never so to live, as not to be able to lay up something against seasons of infirmity, or old age. Justice also requires that we endeavour to lay a reasonable foundation for our children continuing to enjoy, in after life, as many comforts as we have given them in the outset. I need use no arguments to convince you that all this cannot be done without diligence in business; this, therefore, is a laudable view in its pursuit.

2. We should be diligent in business, that we may exhibit a virtuous example, and support the cause of fair dealing, and integrity in the world. Man cannot be an isolated being; his example will have some influence, and we need not be reminded how much the peace, and comfort of the world depend upon the orderly, temperate, and virtuous behaviour of individuals. If all were virtuous, and good, what a world would it be?

In business, throughout all its departments, from the field of the planter, and the counting-house of the merchant, to the most insignificant stall which retails the commodities

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commodities of life, opportunities of violating the principles of justice, and humanity occur. If indolence, and a want of proper care, are found in the first purchase of the article; imposition, and injustice, must be adopted to bring such a dealer upon a *par* with others. Diligence, is the first, and most obvious guard against such a temptation to do wrong. Higher principles, I admit, must follow, and operate, or the fair, and honest character will not be supported; but without diligence, every temptation will come with double force. Circumstances will be deranged. From day to day matters will grow worse, and worse. Debts will accumulate, and the means of discharging them will diminish. One false step after another will be tried. Truth will be sacrificed in every step of the downward road. Unnecessary expences will often be incurred to support an appearance. If a sense of unrighteousness does not sink the spirits, and harrow up the conscience, the dread of shame, and disgrace will; and, in all probability, to stifle reflection, such means will be resorted to,

to, as will only accelerate the ruin which is approaching. In one respect a bankrupt is like Samson, he never falls alone; others are crushed in the ruin which he brings upon himself.

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Professors of the Gospel, the cause of religion is deeply wounded when any event of this kind originates with you. Shall I utter an honest truth? In all probability so many instances of this kind would not be known among us, if *diligence in business* were in higher reputation than it is. A wild spirit of speculation is abroad. Plodding industry, as it is called, is despised; and by some daring, but perilous stroke, men are *making haste to be rich*. Thus *they fall into temptations and snares, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown them in destruction and perdition*. Justice in trade, is a virtue of an high order, and all kinds of deceit in it, is a direct violation of the command of God. *Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small; but thou shalt*
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have a perfect and just weight; a perfect and just measure shalt thou have. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord thy God.* Other things being equal, the diligent man will be less likely to be *unjust* than one that is not so; let this, therefore, be kept in view by us.

3. Let us be diligent in business, that we may be able to do more than merely provide for ourselves, and families. The children of indigence, and real misfortune have a claim upon us, both as men, and as christians. They are the outcasts of the world, but they ought to be the adopted children of faith, and charity. I do not say that we are bound to assist all that come in our way, or even to assist any at an expence which would render us unable to pay our just debts. We have no right to be generous till we have been just; and that man who gives an alms when, in this respect, he cannot afford it, gratifies his feelings, at the expence of his honesty.

* Deut. xxv. 13, &c.

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But it behoves us to remember that, after all this is admitted, we shall not be justified in the sight of God, if we put it out of our power to relieve the distressed, by constantly indulging ourselves or our families in all the superfluities of food, and dress, habitations, and amusements, which the fashion of a vain, and contemptible world is requiring. No, christians, if you cannot deny yourselves in many things of this sort, you have no title to the name you bear. The love of *him who was rich, but for our sakes became poor*, dwells not in you.

4. Be diligent with a view to the credit of religion, and the approbation of God. It has often been said that religion was only a pretence for idleness. This is an old reproach. Pharaoh cast it in the teeth of Moses and Aaron, when they requested that the Israelites might go into the wilderness to sacrifice; and, undoubtedly, too many have, by their conduct, given countenance to such a notion. In all ages, there have been those who have neglected their families, and their proper

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concerns, to run about from sermon to sermon, and become idle upon earth, for the good of their souls in heaven. This is a gross mistake, a conduct to which the blessing of God is never promised, and upon which it can never be rationally expected. The credit of religion requires that instead of less, we shew ourselves more active, more punctual, more upright, and more humane than those who make no profession; if we do not, how can we expect to escape that bitter farcasm, *What do ye more than others?*

We should be diligent in business, that we may be enabled, in the best sense of the expression, to live *above the world*. This is no contradiction, though it may appear one. In most cases persevering diligence will make us easy in our circumstances. In every case it will give us that solid satisfaction which accompanies a faithful discharge of duty. United with other branches of virtue, it will preserve our interest in the divine favour; and cheer us with a sense of our title to the promises of the divine word. Our feet will

will be upon earth, but our eyes, and our hearts will be elevated to heaven.

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The great day of account will be anticipated by the diligent christian tradesman with no uneasiness. His life has not been a cypher. He is not so vain as to suppose no errors will appear; but while justice, and compassion have written most of the figures, he has reason to hope that eternal mercy will cancel his mistakes, and strike a balance in his favour.

As a suitable improvement of the present subject, I will address a few words to *three* classes of people.

1. Those who have been successful in business. With what lively gratitude, my friends, should you review the progress you have made? With what thankfulness should you look up to that favouring providence, which has smiled upon your labours, and blessed you in all your undertakings? *A goodly heritage* is your's, and apparently, you have *stores laid up for many years*. Be not high-minded. The

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instability of earth will not warrant it. *Let not mercy and truth forsake you.* Are you in possession of many talents? Improve them for God, and your souls. Set your families, and acquaintance a noble example of true christian moderation. Exercise a virtuous self-denial. Enjoy, but neither waste, nor abuse your substance. Beware that it does not corrupt yourselves; and if possible, let it not corrupt others. Look abroad into the world. Stretch out the helping hand to honest, but unsuccessful integrity. Remember the large family of distress. Reject not the supplication of the afflicted, neither turn away thy face from a poor man. Lay by a *fund* for this purpose, and consider it as money no longer your own, and then you will not be at a loss, when applications are made, to know whether you have any thing to bestow or not. As prudence, and benevolence shall direct, *give*; and frequently *lend* small sums of money to those who, perhaps, want nothing but such friends as you, to make them happy, and useful through life. A successful tradesman can
do

do this with more advantage than almost any other wealthy character, because of the superior opportunities he has had of knowing the world, and the sound advice with which he is able to accompany his munificence. Thus give to your children, and all within your reach, lessons of prudence, piety, and compassion. Let others profane their prosperity, either by prodigality, or covetousness; and look for their reward, in the disgraceful applause of profligates, or the posthumous reputation of having their names emblazoned on hospitals, or alms-houses; be it your's to nerve the hand of industry, and spread comfort around you while you live; and if, when you come to die, an honest surplus shall remain, dispose of it as God, and your own liberal heart shall dictate.

Suffer me to drop one caution more. There is danger lest the habit of acquiring, should engender a *love of money*. I entreat you beware of this vice. A miser is as contemptible as he is base. He is a traitor to his God, and a robber of his generation.

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More than once the bed of death has been the bed of despair to such a character.

I would address,

2. Such as have been unsuccessful. My friends you ought not to despair. The bread which is fairly earned is the sweetest morsel man can eat. What right have you to set bounds either to your own exertions, or the blessing of God? It has often happened that one attempt has succeeded where others have failed. Examine your own conduct in former cases. See if there were not instances in which you were blameable. Be firm in answering the honest question, were not my misfortunes ascribable, in a great degree at least, to myself? Speak plainly. Did I not waste too much time in my bed, or at my meals, or in the indulgence of an idle, sauntering, gossiping habit? Did I not attend at taverns, or play-houses; not merely when I ought to have been in my business, but with a frequency wholly incompatible with my income, and the discharge of domestic and important duties, when the hours

hours of business were over? If you are conscious you did this, or any thing else inconsistent with sobriety, economy, and diligence, let it be a warning to you to avoid it in future. Be content, and faithful in your present situation. Labour with your head, and hands in the service of those by whom you may be employed. Establish a character for sobriety, integrity, and activity. Pray earnestly to God that he would make your way clear before you, and if ever an opportunity offers that may with prudence be embraced, set forward again with steadiness, caution, and vigour. Friends may offer, and if such is your conduct, they are more likely to do it; but depend chiefly upon God, and yourselves.

3. Let me address those upon whom the weight of business now rests. These I suppose to be chiefly the young, and the middle aged.

From the young, diligence may be justly expected, and in them it is peculiarly necessary. In youth the capacity for diligence is greatest, and the practice of it will produce a thousand good consequences.

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Mind, and body will be strengthened. Many temptations will be avoided. Time for reasonable amusement will be honestly secured. A foundation will be laid for lasting respectability, and a gradual relaxation when infirmity, and old age approach. Let me exhort you, therefore, to take time by the forelock. Nothing is done well which is done in a hurry.

Rise *early* in the morning, this is of vast importance. The prudent, diligent traveller goes a stage before breakfast; and a stage in the journey of every day, before others start, will give you incalculable advantages. In particular, this will enable you, without any indecent hurry, to begin every day with God, and yet be beforehand with thousands of those who are so ungrateful as to neglect him. If you are early, your family, and servants will be early too, and the probability is, that things will proceed smoothly and comfortably through the day.

When *in* your business, there abide with God. The shop, the counting-house, or the market, are the places in which the diligent

diligent tradesman should be uniformly found. At the proper hours he will forsake none of these places. He will have no reason to complain that his time hangs heavy upon him, for, in the faithful discharge of his duty, he will find ample employment for his head, and his hands. Devote your thoughts properly to your business: it is the sphere in which Providence has placed you, and in which your ready active obedience will be acceptable to your Maker.

Pay a proper attention to *little* things, those who despise little things will seldom possess great ones. A small customer, treated with disdain, will often prevent a great one from entering your doors.

It would be easy to give you a multitude of hints, as to *justice* and *mercy*, *prudence* and *truth*, in the management of business; but my subject requires that I confine myself chiefly to diligence, and I must close, upon this head, in a few words, that I may not forget diligence for eternity. Lay the foundation of diligence by early habit: Confirm it by perseverance:

regulate

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regulate it by prudence: sanctify it with devotion: guard against the abuse of it by religious principles, and you may reasonably hope that a life so spent will be crowned with the divine favour, and lead to a calm, and dignified old age.

I shall close with a few words to persons of all ages, and characters. If diligence in the business of earth is of so much importance, shall we dare to be idle in the great business of another world? Here it becomes us to be on our guard. The very virtue of diligence, which I have been recommending, if it be confined to the concerns of this world, will be a fatal snare to our souls. At the same time, if we exercise prayer, and watchfulness over our hearts, it will be found, by the divine blessing, an advantage; for the habit of diligence will be found profitable both for earth and for heaven. In a comparative view, what are the riches of earth? While we labour and strive to acquire these, shall we pay no attention to the riches of grace? Shall we think nothing of that purity of mind, that capacity for spiritual delights

delights which it is the design of the gospel to form within us? Shall we feel no transport at the thought of treasures laid up in heaven? of becoming the associates of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect? Shall we have no sense of the love of God, and the compassion of the Redeemer? Shall we exercise no diligence in withstanding temptation? in cherishing the temper of the blessed Jesus? in attending the means of grace? in realising to our minds the rewards of futurity? in cultivating those christian graces which alone can prepare us for the abodes of glory? If we do *not*, we ought to be ashamed of the diligence we discover in worldly pursuits. In the present *generation we may be wiser than the children of light*, but what shall we be in another?

Christians of all ranks and ages! I call you in the sight of Jesus, and of God, to this spiritual diligence. Young people! it is impossible you can begin too soon, it is impossible you can be exercised too well, in that diligence which will fit you for heaven. Whatever you gain, or lose upon earth,

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earth, I beseech you forfeit not the favour of God, and the hope of immortality. Ye who are bearing the *burden and heat of the day*, who are toiling with laudable diligence for the *bread which perisheth*! forget not *that which endureth to life everlasting*. Clothe your bodies, but leave not your souls naked. Ye hoary travellers to whom *the grasshopper is a burden*, and who have much ado to creep out the remainder of your path! I hope *your* spiritual work is not now to begin! You have laboured and accumulated upon earth; *surely*, you are not destitute of a treasure in heaven! Ye *prosperous* toilers! forget not the duties you have to perform. Ye *weary mendicants*! who are broken with the buffetings of a stormy ocean—if your consciences do not reproach you, be of good courage: God has provided a *covert from the tempest*. The haven of eternal rest is full before you. Ye *drones* in the hive! if any such peruse this discourse, tremble at the days of beggary, and disgrace, which are posting towards you. Men, and women, young, and old, rich, and poor! *whatsoever your hands find*

find to do, in the prospect of an eternal world, do it with your might. In the grave there is neither knowledge nor device, and beyond the grave the state of probation ceases. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and your labour in him shall not be in vain.

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SERMON III.

ON SELF-SATISFACTION.

PROVERBS V. 15.

*Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and
running waters out of thine own well.*

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IN these words the wise man has, with conciseness, and beauty, told us, that if we expect any felicity, either here, or hereafter, we must look for it in those resources which are properly, and fairly our own. If we lean for happiness upon any thing without us, any thing over which we have no controul, we shall certainly be disappointed. If we depend, for the divine approbation, upon any thing but sincere, and honest endeavours after real goodness of character, we shall assuredly find ourselves mistaken. We can neither be holy,
nor

nor receive the rewards of holiness by proxy. *Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.* From these passages, one from the Old, and the other from the New Testament, I shall endeavour to support this proposition, that a foundation for present, and a meetness for future happiness, are to be sought for in our own temper, and conduct. Previous to entering upon this proof, I shall make one remark, to guard against a mistake, or abuse of what I shall advance.

Nothing I shall say upon the subject is so to be understood as if I meant to assert, that it was possible for a man to be happy, independent of the divine favour, and assistance. This can never be maintained with truth; for whether we consider ourselves as innocent, or penitent creatures, the only worthy lights in which we can be viewed; every thing which is excellent in us, will be seen to flow from the imparting, or restoring favour of the Divine Being. In

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the due regulation of our moral powers however, we are so left to the management of ourselves, that our actions may be properly denominated our own. It results from this constitution of things, that the miseries into which we sometimes fall, cannot be charged on God as their procuring cause: and also, that our virtues are so really our own, as to justify the exhortation, to *drink waters out of our own cistern*. What are the precise limits of human ability? is a curious, and difficult question, but it is one, with the niceties of which we have little to do. The intricacies of speculation may puzzle the profoundest understanding, but the path of duty is too plain to mislead the honest heart. *Evil pursueth sinners, but to the righteous good shall be repayed. By mercy, and truth, iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* Having thus endeavoured to guard against misconstruction, I shall attempt to establish, and improve, the truth maintained in the text; and this I shall do by shewing what it is in ourselves which is the foundation of happiness;

pinels; and how well such causes are calculated to produce such an effect.

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Man is a compound being, made up of mind, and body. By the former he is allied to superior intelligences, and by the latter connected with material and earthly objects. By his mind he is made capable of rising in the scale of knowledge, and improvement, to an incalculable height; and by his body he is chained down to mortality, and confined in all his pursuits, and expectations, to the narrow limits of *three-score years and ten*. Reason is given, as a guide, to this complex being; the sceptre of authority is put into her hand, and when that sceptre is obeyed man is a noble and glorious creature, an associate of angels, and an heir of immortality! The

I. Thing which can enable a man to drink waters out of his own cistern, is the supremacy of reason, or the prevalence of the mind over the body, and its low, and groveling propensities. It is the great, and governing law of the universe, that order is the grand medium of happiness. The

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frame of nature, in its original organization, beautifully illustrated this remark. Its several parts were fitted to each other by the consummate skill of the eternal mind. Its opposite, and jarring properties were poised, and harmonized with such nice, and just proportion, that upon a review of the whole, the Almighty Creator pronounced it *very good*. In a large, and elegant edifice, the convenience, and beauty, which are so grateful to the inhabitant, and spectator, are the result of the proportion, and order of its several parts. Thus it is in the natural, and thus it is in the moral world. The orderly state, and regular disposition of the several parts of the human frame, are absolutely necessary to present enjoyment, and to any cheering, and lively hope in the prospect of futurity. When reason sits upon the throne; when the generous and friendly affections predominate in the soul; when the passions occupy their proper place, and are kept only as the subordinate ministers of our pleasures; then, only, does a man deserve, in its proper sense, the epithet of good, and then only can

can he have rejoicing in himself, and not in another.

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Man was designed to be the child of reason, not the slave of appetite; and, consequently, he then best fulfils the end of his creation, the glory of his Maker, and the happiness of himself, when he best follows that rule which reason prescribes. In proportion as he deviates from this standard, he wanders from duty, sinks his character, and loses his happiness. There cannot be a more absurd idea than to suppose, that when men follow their passions they follow their nature; to do this is to degrade their nature, and dishonour their God. To obey the dictates of reason, to listen to the voice of conscience, to be temperate, just, and benevolent: this is to fall in with the end of our creation, to co-operate with the Deity, to purify our minds in the present world, and to prepare them for improvement, and bliss, in that which is to come. To support this proper state of the soul, we must ever cherish its noblest, and best affections, and in so doing we shall secure a serenity, which, as nothing external

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can give, so, nothing without ourselves can fully take away. Let gratitude, benevolence, compassion, and all the mild, and generous dispositions, triumph in the soul; and their hateful opponents, hardness of heart, envy, revenge, and other disgraceful tendencies, will grow weaker and weaker, and, in time, be rooted out of our minds. To be swayed by the former of these is honour, liberty, and peace; to be under the dominion of the latter, disgrace, slavery, and ruin.

II. Another thing which will enable a man to *drink waters out of his own cistern*, will be that self-approbation which will spring from the testimony of a good conscience. This self-approbation is the necessary result of that maintenance of the empire of reason in the soul, which has been just recommended. *This, says the Apostle, is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.* We are frail and imperfect creatures,

creatures, and, therefore, often fall into mistakes, and are exposed to many disappointments in our journey through life. Many accidents which our limited foresight could not perceive, or against which our prudence could not provide, may disconcert some of our favourite plans, and perhaps, involve others as well as us in their disagreeable consequences. The reflection, however, that the whole scheme was innocently intended, and as prudently executed as our ability permitted, will blunt our feelings to the keenest edge of the disappointment, and dispose us to a calmer submission to the frustration of our designs. We see enough of the scene, to which we are here introduced, to convince us that we are very unequal to the task of comprehending the whole, or even any considerable part of the divine plan: but we have abundant reason to be thankful, that its intricacies do not concern us, that the path of duty is very plain, and that a good conscience will be the best preservative against vexation, and distress.

It is an old maxim, that a good con-

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science is a continual feast. The man who can daily regale himself at this table is richly feasted. Satisfied with the unbiassed verdict of an impartial judge, he can retire from the banquet, and repose on a pillow of down which no thorn can penetrate. If the path in which he should go appears at any time uncertain; if several paths seem equally to lie before him; whatever blandishments may tempt him to some, whatever dangers may threaten him in others; with conscience for his guide, fear is a stranger to his steps. When we follow conscience, as well informed as we can, we know that whatever happens we are following a safe, and good guide. We are in the path of duty; at the end of that path, a God, a Saviour, and a Heaven are placed, and can we wish for greater blessings?

III. A man *drinks waters out of his own cistern*, when he is contented with whatever Providence allots to him. This, perhaps, is the principal sense of the text, but there can be no harm in our using it with more latitude. Let a man govern his passions

sions, and obey conscience, and he will not arraign the appointments of Providence, as defective either in wisdom or goodness. He will view the universe as in the hands of his father, and his God. His own station he will contemplate as the appointment of the fullest benevolence, under the direction of the most consummate wisdom. As all is serene, and balanced within, all will appear harmonious, and bright without. The good man is convinced that the measures of the divine administration, are always directed to the encouragement, and reward of virtue; and to the banishment of vice, and misery, from the moral creation. Such a one will rejoice in God, and will endeavour to act whatever part is assigned him, with a fidelity, and cheerfulness, which shall mark the serene confidence of his own bosom. In the arrangement of the best possible plan, his post may be sometimes painful: friends and possessions may be taken from him: a good in prospect may never be realized: of a blessing recently possessed he may be deprived: the child of many hopes may disappoint them all: unavoidable accidents may blast his worldly

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worldly prospects: sickness may emaciate his body: distressing fears may assail his mind: the whole horizon may grow black: the rains may descend, and the winds may rave; the ocean may roll billow after billow against him, yet amidst all the uproar, a voice is heard, *Peace, be still*, hitherto shall the waves come, but no further. *Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am THY GOD: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* The voice of consolation is heard and acknowledged. The soul submits to every divine disposal: it has not a desire, a hope, a wish, but what is centered in God.

IV. The hope which springs from all these considerations, forms a distinct, and noble source of inward happiness. A consciousness, that in some humble degree we have preserved the dominion of reason in our minds; that we have followed, as far as we could discern them, the dictates of conscience, and endeavoured to cultivate a temper of entire resignation to the divine will:

will: this, with a full conviction of the rectitude, and goodness of the Divine Being, will prove in our souls, *a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.* We shall have hopes which christianity only can bestow, and which eternity alone can limit. By the mercy of God, and by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are begotten to the lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. In the prospect of this glorious inheritance, we are enabled to soar above the world, and to look down with a noble superiority upon every merely human pursuit. For what is all the bustle of mortality? A little heap of shining dust! A few acres of dirty soil! A sounding title which vanishes with the breath by which it is pronounced! A scanty rivulet of pleasure, which mocks our thirst! Are these the riches of earth? and are the men who possess the largest share of them called the happiest? My soul, pity their delusion, and fix thy attention on nobler objects. Didst thou possess the largest share of these things, to-morrow might see thee stripped of

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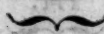
of them all; but the triumph over passion, the serenity of a good conscience, and the glorious prospect of eternal joy; may well cheer thee in every situation, inspire thee with the true dignity of a good man, and make thee satisfied from thyself.

These are some of the considerations which will enable a man to *drink waters out of his own cistern*, and have *rejoicing in himself alone*: I shall now endeavour to shew how well the kind of happiness here recommended is fitted to make a man *satisfied from himself*.

1. This happiness is firm, and stable. It depends upon no outward circumstances. It is not to be shaken by the variations of prosperity, or adversity. It goes with us wherever we go: it dwells with us wherever we dwell. In solitude it is our companion. In society it is our guard. In the closet it adds fervour to our devotion. In the family it sweetens our temper. In the world it governs our practice. It directs us to the pursuit of whatever is amiable, and honourable. Being founded on what we are, and not on what we possess, it can never

never desert us, except we desert ourselves. It is solid, for its foundation is laid in rectitude of heart. It is durable, for it is seated in that part of us which can never die. It is complete, for the approbation of that Being who is immutable fulness, is its chief ingredient.

2. This is a pure happiness. It flows directly from our spiritual, and immortal part, when it is in that situation for which its maker designed it. The moral powers are here supposed to be in their appointed, and proper order: the will governed by reason, and the appetites, and passions, in their due state of subordination. The behaviour is regulated by a regard to the divine authority, by a proper estimation of surrounding objects, by an attention, not merely to the feelings and gratifications of the present moment, but to those nobler, and higher pursuits which extend beyond the grave. This happiness is pure, because it is fixed, not upon the drossy, and perishable objects of sense, but upon the spiritual, and invariable properties of mind, and heaven.

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heaven. The passions, in their best state, are but foul springs of happiness. When gratified in their proper way, they have many uneasy sensations mingled with their transports, and are accompanied with a sense of debasement. Nothing of this kind attends those joys, the peculiar seat of which is the mind, and from which a good man reaps that pleasure which we have been endeavouring to describe. Sensual joy may be compared to a noisy, shallow, rambling stream, which the least interruption renders thick, and muddy, from its nearness to the bottom over which it flows. The happiness which we have been contemplating, presents us with the image of a deep unruffled river, into which, if a stone is thrown, no effect is produced except at the surface. A beautiful circle spreads from the point at which it entered, but its clearness is not sullied, for the source of pollution is far below. I think this is no unjust picture of a good man's mind. The lower, and baser affections of the soul, as well as the appetites, and
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lusts of the body, are kept at so remote a distance by those christian graces, and virtues which are found in his bosom, that the common temptations of life lose their effect. They may pierce his comforts with a transient sting, but they will have no power so to rouse his corrupt principles, as to fully that stream of divine joy which flows in his soul. The satisfaction of the good man is the most noble, and independent which this world knows; indeed, the world, in one sense, knows nothing of it, for it is neither founded on its favours, nor affected by its frowns. The good man soars above the world, and for his purest delights looks only to God, and his own mind.

3. This happiness is of a very exalted kind. This follows directly from the last observation. The felicity of a good man is purer, and more independent, than any other felicity upon earth, because it springs from a nobler source. It is conversant, not with the trifles, and vanities of time, but with the sublime objects of the intellectual

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It enables its possessor clearly to discern the true nature, and properly to estimate the difference between temporal, and eternal things. It carries him from every thing low, and frivolous, to the contemplation of those objects which reason, and faith, represent as most worthy the attention of a rational, and immortal spirit. It leads him through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and places him on Mount Sion. It shews him the *multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and tribes, and tongues, standing before the throne.* He sees the white robes, and the triumphant palms of that blissful assembly. He hears the anthem which rises from the "shining ranks," *Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth: blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

Thus it is evident that a good man may *drink the waters of happiness out of his own cistern;* and be satisfied from himself, because the materials which compose his
 felicity

felicity are more *firm, pure, and exalted*,
than those which make up the aggregate
of all earthly blifs.

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This subject may give us a true notion of happiness. It does not consist in a multitude of possessions. It is not annexed to any particular rank in life. It is not confined to any age. It is not the prerogative of one sex more than the other. It is certainly increased by bodily health, but even on the bed of sickness it does not desert the good man. In short, happiness is the creature of the mind, and for the greatest share of it we must depend upon ourselves. Nothing can give it, in any degree, to us, but a conviction that, in some good measure, we are maintaining the proper balance of our minds. It results from honourable notions of the Great Supreme, and from a discharge of the duties of life becoming the followers of the blessed Jesus. Let us, by the assistance of divine grace, labour to do this, and we may defy the world to make us miserable. Let humility, and piety, govern our devotion: let temperance, and love,

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mark our domestic conduct: let honesty and affability go with us into the world: let sympathy carry us to the house of mourning: let gratitude, and reverence, conduct us to the temple of religion, and we must, in the sum of our lives, be easy and chearful.

Morality, and piety, God has joined together, let us take care that we never separate them. Morality, founded on christian principles, holiness in the life, and grace in the heart, constitutes that character which angels revere, which Jesus loves, and which God himself will finally accept.

Lastly. This subject must afford us a strong motive to grow daily in the christian life. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace!* Holiness is the only way to happiness. A God of purity must love the offering of a pure heart. Happiness is the grand pursuit of man. Of this universal object of pursuit, be it remembered, none but the good man ever gets possession. To be happy here, is the way

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to be happy for ever. To *drink waters out of his own cistern*, is the description of the good man upon earth; to drink of that *river of pleasure which flows at the right hand of God*, is the portion of the good man in heaven.

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SERMON IV.

ON BEING ASHAMED OF APPEARING
RELIGIOUS.

MATTHEW XVI. 20.

*Then charged he his Disciples, that they
should tell no man that he was Jesus the
Christ.*

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THE cautions of this kind which our Lord was frequently giving, are to be considered as proofs of his genuine affection to his followers. He did not wish to expose them to any unnecessary danger, and to avoid this, as long as it was consistent with the success of the great object of his mission, he concealed his high pretensions. In the early periods of his ministry, had he openly assumed the title of the *Messiah*, an insurrection would have

have followed. An opportunity would have been afforded for charging him with sedition; and whether success or defeat had been the result, it must have been unpropitious to the establishment of that spiritual dominion, which *Jesus* came to introduce. The benevolent Redeemer, was no friend to tumult and anarchy. He came to save, and not to destroy the lives of men; and, therefore, for a long season, he contented himself with a silent appeal to the understandings, and hearts of his countrymen. His general instructions, his benevolent miracles, his exemplary and amiable life, were left to speak in his favour. But thus it was not always to remain. In those directions for their future conduct, which he gave to his Apostles, he tells them that, what they now *heard in the ear, they were then to publish on the house tops*. After his departure from our world, they were, on no consideration, to conceal either his character or designs. *In his name, repentance, and remission of sins, were to be preached among ALL nations, beginning at Jerusalem*. For, says he, who-

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soever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and of his Father, and of the holy angels.

It becomes us, my brethren, to ask ourselves, whether we have, in any respect, been ashamed of Christ? Whether we have been ashamed of what appeared to us to be the truths which he delivered? Whether we have been ashamed of his character; or of that holy and self-denying religion which the Gospel recommends? Upon each of these questions I shall propose an enquiry, and ask what reason there is for that backwardness in appearing to be religious, which is too evident amongst many professors? Ostentation in religion, I am far from wishing. Whatever be the spirit of Jesus, it is certainly not a forward, peremptory, and imposing spirit; and it would be no difficult matter to prove, that all these properties belong to ostentation. But without this, there is a firm, open, and virtuous deportment, equally remote from levity, and austerity, which may, and ought

ought to be adopted by the christian. It avoids bigotry, and superstition, on the one hand, and it keeps clear of carelessness, and impiety, on the other. This manly deportment stamps true dignity on the character, and will secure, in the end, the approbation of many of those who affect to despise it. This, however, is its smallest recommendation, for, whether or not it makes this impression upon our fellow mortals, it will certainly establish the peace of our own minds, and draw down upon us the favour of Almighty God. It is, therefore, not only the heroism of the Christian, but the best and most durable wisdom of man.

Let us ask, therefore,

I. Is there any thing in the character of *Christ* which lays a foundation for shame?

The dignity of our Lord's person is not the point on which I mean now to insist. That is not so properly a *moral* ground of esteem. If a being be truly virtuous, it is of little consequence what is the rank

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of intelligencies to which he belongs, Moral excellence results, not from arbitrary, and accidental circumstances; but from uniform, and vigorous exertions in the discharge of duty, whatever may be the near, or remote, consequences of such a conduct. It is peculiarly in this point of view that the blessed Jesus challenges our admiration. In the face of prejudice, and reproach; yea, in the very crisis of suffering and death, he manifested a mind wholly devoted to the great objects for which he came into the world. To his disciples his language was, *I have meat to eat which ye know not of.* To his enemies, *I must work the works of HIM that sent me.* In all his conduct there is a harmony, consistency, and excellence, which must secure him the applause of every unprejudiced understanding. Far from feeling any shame in the review, if we are alive to true dignity of character, we shall cry out with the Roman Centurion, *truly this was a Son of God!*

Let us consider Jesus in the common intercourse of life, and learn of him, who
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was at once the most amiable, and perfect of characters, how to demean ourselves.

A free, and open deportment, in his general commerce with mankind, characterized the whole behaviour of the Son of God. He mingled, without reserve or hesitation, in the usual assemblies of men. He avoided no places, but the professed haunts of vice. He scrupled not to sit down, either at the table of a pharisee, or of a publican. He contributed, even by a miracle, to the virtuous joy of a bridal feast. He had none of the sour and forbidding features of a religious bigot; but it should also be remembered, that he never, for a moment, forgot the reverence which was due from himself to his own character. Placid and benevolent he uniformly was, but at no time can we discern the remotest approaches to a light and trifling spirit.

Upon all occasions our divine master manifested every proper degree of respect to the different ranks of human life. He separated, in the most judicious manner, civil and sacred concerns; and, by this means, while he sacrificed not a title of
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the divine honour, he gave not the smallest offence to the Roman governors of his country. *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's*, will stand an eternal directory of honest conduct in such cases, and an everlasting proof of the rectitude, and beauty, of our Lord's behaviour. While, however, the blessed Jesus, thus carefully avoided every unnecessary cause of offence, he did not, on any proper occasion, spare even the greatest offenders. The wicked ministers of religion, especially, incurred his severest reprehensions. Beside many incidental reproaches to those flagrant hypocrites, the Scribes and Pharisees; almost the whole of that awful chapter, the *twenty-third* of Matthew's Gospel, is employed in the most bitter, and direct accusations of those ministers of the Jewish establishment. Terrible indeed are the woes denounced against them; they clearly prove how abominable it is, in the sight of God, to trifle with, or abuse, holy things, and how dreadful it must be to incur his righteous indignation. In the course of his

his ministry, and particularly on such occasions as these, our Lord was exposed to the fiercest resentment of this proud, and implacable body of men. What was his conduct? Did he court persecution, and rashly throw himself in their way? No. Till that moment, which he emphatically stiled his appointed hour, was come, he manifested the utmost attention, by every prudential step, to avoid their fury. In the holy *Jesus* all was calm, and temperate. His full resignation to the appointments of his God and Father, was disgraced by no transports of enthusiasm, and turbulent zeal. He hesitated not, when the proper time was come, to fill up the character of the *good shepherd*, and *lay down his life for the sheep*; but, previous to that, he shewed, by his precepts and example, that there was nothing, either honourable, or desirable, in the mere circumstance of suffering martyrdom. In the sacred cause of God, and truth, we are to part, even with life itself, but not till every virtuous method of saving it has been tried. *When they persecute you in*

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one city, flee to another. This precept he illustrated, again and again, in his own example.

The character of the great Apostle, and high-priest of our profession, is not only courteous, firm, and prudent, but animated, in all its parts, by the most ardent piety to God, and the most diffusive benevolence to man. *I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. Father, not my will, but thine be done!* was the uniform language of our Lord. It was his delight to hold communion with the omnipotent, and gracious Creator of all. Midnight was the season, and a silent desert the temple, in which he frequently carried on this holy, and elevating intercourse. In these sacred interviews with God, he drank in large potions of that divine spirit which was given to him *without measure*. From the wilderness of temptation he came forth to the scene of duty, and manifested to what an exalted height the spirit of devotion can raise its true votaries. The very errand upon which he came among men, evinced in
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the most decisive manner, the magnanimity, and benevolence, of his sacred bosom. In the beautiful language of ancient prophecy, and in a Jewish synagogue, this is the account which he gives of himself. *The spirit of JEHOVAH is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted; to announce deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them who are bruised; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.* What truly godlike purposes are these, and how strange does it appear that such gracious intentions should have met with a single opponent? Strange, indeed, that the friend of humanity, the instructor of the ignorant, the physician, both of soul, and body, should have been traduced as a vicious character; hunted about as a public enemy; and, at last, executed as a blasphemer of God, and a deceiver of men! Sad as it is, this has been no uncommon case. In all ages, pride, bigotry, and prejudice, have spurned

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at modesty and worth. Injustice, and violence, have perpetrated their murderous designs; and innocence, and integrity, have been their bleeding victims. Such, in the present case, were the means by which an infinitely wise God chose to adorn suffering virtue, and reconcile a guilty world to himself. The magnanimity of our master is evident from this consideration; that from the very outset of his generous undertaking, he knew in what manner his earthly career would finish. *I am the good shepherd*, said he to his disciples, *and I lay down my life for the sheep: and other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring; they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd: therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this COMMISSION have I received of my Father.* My brethren, I shall only ask the plain question; shall we be ashamed of such a character?

II. Have

II. Have we reason to be ashamed of the doctrines which our Lord delivered? SERM.
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Much has been ascribed, both by friends, and enemies, to the blessed Jesus, which, I apprehend, he never taught. Had many things, which even some truly upright, and sincere believers have attributed to him, been really his doctrines, I think it would have been a difficult matter for a thinking sensible man to become a christian. It becomes us all to remember, that the *New Testament* is the only rule of action, and the only repository of articles of faith to a disciple of Jesus. This is a position which few protestants, at least, will controvert in theory, but this will not determine a thousand questions which may arise upon the subject. I will therefore venture to propose *two* other general maxims, to which, if mankind would universally attend, all disputes upon religious topics would cease. The first maxim is this :

That only is an article of faith to any man, which really appears to him to be so.

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Upon this principle, all pretensions for religious persecution are at an end, and it is only by admitting this principle that they can be done away. In religious concerns our only master is God, and to him alone every individual must stand or fall. My neighbour has nothing to do with my religious sentiments, nor I with his. If one thinks he can improve, and edify another, it is his duty to offer to do it; but there the matter ought to stop: all beyond this, is an interference which the great head of the church has not warranted in his followers.

The second maxim is, that civil, and sacred things, have nothing to do with each other, and that therefore they ought not to be blended together.

My kingdom is not of this world. Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God, the things which are God's. These are the words of Christ, and they appear to me, totally to exclude the authority of the civil magistrate from his church.

The doctrines of our Lord, which I shall
now

now mention, are those upon which no dispute, whether they are to be found in the New Testament or not, has ever been raised.

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He uniformly avowed himself the Son, and authorized messenger of the most high God; and declared that he was deputed by his Heavenly Father, to seek and to save those that were lost. The words which he uttered were not his own, but his who sent him. He came into the world, not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him. As the natural result of these plain declarations.

He constantly asserted, in the strongest terms, the *unity* and the *providence* of his heavenly Father. With the utmost solemnity he replied to a Scribe, who asked him which was the first commandment, that it was this, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord, &c.*; and at the conclusion of the conversation, when the Scribe had said, *Well, master, thou hast said the truth, for there is but one God, and there is none other but he; and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and*

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with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings, and sacrifices; Jesus said to him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

The Providence of this one supreme, and self-existent God, is a clear and repeated doctrine of our Saviour. In various places, it is expressly, and beautifully laid down. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. The very hairs of your head are all numbered; fear ye not, therefore, for ye are of more value than many sparrows.* By Luke we have similar declarations thus expressed: *Takeno thought for your life what ye shall eat, neither for the body what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment: consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have neither store house nor barn, and God feedeth them. How much better are ye than the fowls?*

That this Holy and Sovereign God, is a constant observer of our actions, and, therefore, the proper object of our supreme regard,

regard, is another of those truths, which the declarations of Jesus, again and again, press upon our notice. No thought can be more fitted to strike both the virtuous and vicious man. To the good man, it must communicate the highest delight, that a merciful and impartial judge, is noticing all his conduct. He is sensible that this righteous governor, while he beholds his struggles, will appreciate the true value of that resistance, which, though it sometimes fails, he is constantly making against iniquity. He is satisfied that every proper allowance will be made for the turbulence of passion, the seductions of appetite, and all the latent weaknesses of the human heart.

To the vicious man, the idea that a God who cannot be deceived, is marking his conduct, must be pregnant with the best consequences. If he has any sense of human dependence, and of human guilt, it is impossible he should be unaffected by it.

That this life is not the whole of man, was also expressly taught by this divine prophet. He assures us, that there is a

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state, and a day coming, in which a very awful difference shall be made between good and bad characters. This important article had agitated the minds of men in all ages, and before the appearance of Jesus it had been discussed to no purpose: but in the gospel not a doubt is left. An idle curiosity as to the *time* and *manner* in which this solemn scrutiny shall be made, is no where gratified; but, in the plainest terms we are assured, that we must all appear before *the judgment-seat of Christ*. There we must answer for ourselves, not in parties and sects, but as single, unconnected individuals, for the *things done in the body*. The close of this august investigation is represented as terminating every trial, and fixing the everlasting state of its objects. *The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal!*

I have selected these articles as a specimen of those doctrines which the prophet, and lord, of the christian church, inculcated upon his followers. It would be easy to increase the list, but these, which
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are a fair sample, are abundantly sufficient to shew that there is nothing in the doctrines taught by our Master of which we can be ashamed. On the contrary, it ought to afford us the highest satisfaction that christianity is indeed, and in truth, a religion worthy of God to give, and fit for man to practise.

III. A few words shall suffice for the last proposed enquiry, which was:—Is there any thing to be ashamed of in that *life* of religion and virtue, which it was the business of the Son of God to introduce among men? Infidelity has lavished the most extravagant praises upon the writings of those pagan sages, which were dedicated to the purpose of promoting morality in the world. Far be it from me to depreciate their worth, or to undervalue what was excellent in their characters or works. Considering the disadvantages under which they laboured, their writings, and their conduct, may put thousands of noisy christians to shame. But when this is granted, complaisance must not be carried so far as

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to injure truth. Whatever these admired systems of virtue inculcate, is to be found, better expressed, and more firmly established in the book of God. And, besides this, in that sacred volume are many articles of the very first importance, without which religion has no foundation, and man has no hope, on which the best heathen writers are wholly silent. In a word, when virtue needs an apology, and time can be proved of more value than eternity, then, but not till then, may a christian be ashamed both of his Lord, and his religion.

If this is the case, it is surely reasonable to enquire, whence comes it, that such multitudes are, in their conduct, ashamed of *Jesus*? Why, if they are religious at all, must it be like *Nicodemus*, in the dark? Is there any thing contemptible in that reverence which religion requires us to manifest to the Father of lights and mercies? Is there any thing pusillanimous in fearing *the God in whose hands our breath is, and whose all our ways are*? Is the worm of yesterday, while he breathes by his Maker's permission and support, too proud

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to acknowledge the obligation? If he is, can reason palliate his folly, or justify his pride? Is there any thing dishonourable in acknowledging a debt which we are unable to pay? Is gratitude a feeling which ought to redden the cheek with shame? To bear the name of the most perfect, and amiable character which the world ever saw: to be the professed followers of the *well-beloved Son of the most high God*: to tread in his footsteps whose life was perfect goodness; are these circumstances at which we should blush? I wish, my fellow professors, and I am sure it is no bad wish, that neither you nor I had any thing worse to be ashamed of. If we have any knowledge of our real characters, our blushes will arise from a very different source. We shall be ashamed that we have not, with greater uniformity, walked worthy of our profession. We shall be humbled at the bar of conscience, that we have caused the name of our master to be lightly spoken of by imprudence and negligence, if not by open and deliberate transgression. While we have any sense of obligation, while we

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have any idea of the worth of moral excellence, instead of being ashamed, we shall glory in the name of Jesus! We shall esteem it our highest happiness to make any attainments which can assimilate us to him. Every view we can take of his character will increase our veneration and love. Every reflection upon human guilt will fill us with gratitude to God for his unspeakable gift; and every perception that we have of human frailty, will dispose us to pray that hereafter, this Saviour may not be ashamed of us.

SERMON

SERMON V.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF EXAMPLE.

MATTHEW V. 14.

A city which is set on an hill cannot be hid.

BY this lively simile, the founder of christianity has shewn the necessity of a good example in its followers, in the most striking manner. The figure needs no illustration. The narrowest understanding can see, that an object placed on an eminence is exposed on all sides. That in proportion as a character is seen, and known, it is likely to influence; and, that therefore, it should be guarded with double diligence. This leads me directly to what I have now in view, a discourse upon the influence of example. Few subjects are of greater importance. The

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superior efficacy of example over precept, has even passed into a proverb, and this is no insignificant proof of its real importance; for most proverbs are concise and nervous epitomes of experimental truth. Their words are few, but the ideas which they embrace are, generally, numerous. Man is the creature of imitation. Generations and individuals copy those who have gone before them; and even the variations which genius and reflection are continually striking out, have a close reference to the standards from which they deviate.

Every possible variety of age is blended in the same generation. Every shade of character is exhibited at the same time. The good and the bad, in the common intercourse of society, cannot be separated. The "wheat, and the tares," grow in the same soil, but human life never stands still. Like the waves of the ocean, which are uniformly pressing to the shore, and seemingly lost when they arrive there, one generation is hastening forward to lose itself in another. The employments and pursuits of the same individual are in a continual

nual state of change. *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* Through all these changes, however, the power of example is permanent. The pursuits and objects necessarily vary, but the principle itself is the same. It operates from the cradle to the grave. Not a single individual is exempt from its influence. Whether in a high or a low station; whether the mind be richly or parsimoniously stored with ideas; whether for few or many years it has traversed the path of life; whatever be the nature of its employments, in all circumstances, man is acting in a *two-fold* direction; he is communicating to others, and receiving upon himself, the influence of example. This being the case, it is of the highest importance to each, in what manner he acts, because not merely to himself, but to others he may prove *a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death!*

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Surely, we can never wholly forget that, though mortal here, we are not mortal for eternity!

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eternity! Death is before us, but that is not all, a judgment must follow. At the tribunal of God it is not a matter of option, whether or no we shall appear. The trumpet of the last day will utter a blast too loud for us to sleep under. Accountability belongs to man, and by whatever sophistry he may now delude his understanding, by whatever opiate he may at present lull his conscience, the miserable wretch, who has uniformly propagated vice by his example, will find that he is roused from the slumbers of the grave, to meet the *terrors* of his God!

It may be asked, why is example more powerful than precept? I answer, example is *universal, constant, and simple* in its operation; precept is *limited, fugitive, and complex*.

Example is universal. Upon all occasions, it is easy to observe how men act, but to give directions for every turn and change in human life, is impossible. In every country example must operate with nearly the same general force; but the power of precept must depend upon the manner

manner in which it is communicated, and upon a greater degree of attention than many will be induced to pay. Example will not determine, in a thousand cases, the propriety of actions, but of their practicability it leaves no doubt. What I see another perform, I am led to hope that, if necessary, I may also perform. This is particularly the case with regard to that important class of moral duties which relate to the government of our passions, the exercise of self denial, the forgiveness of injuries, and those other peculiarities of the christian temper, in which the very essence of religion consists. In all such cases, precept may point out, argument may excite, and exhortation impel; but example will do all these at once, it will fully illustrate, and finally push into action.

Example is obvious, and at hand; precept is often forgotten, and out of sight. Slight and fugitive are the traces which instructions, however excellent, frequently make upon the mind: strong and deep are the lines which an action passing immediately before us, engraves upon the memory.

Example

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Example is simple and direct in its operation; precept is circuitous and slow in its approach. The one cannot be mistaken, the other is liable to doubt and question. The former is a warm interesting address to the heart; the latter is often a cold appeal to the understanding. Precept shows us the path of duty, but example is a friend who takes us by the hand, obviates all our objections, smoothes a thousand difficulties, and kindly compels us to walk in it. It is this, among other considerations, which renders christianity a religion so peculiarly proper for man. It is an historical religion. It is divine philosophy, teaching by examples. The history of our Lord himself will fully illustrate this remark; every precept he delivered was enforced by his own example. Upon this it would be easy to enlarge, and shew what glorious effects have resulted from it; particularly what an army of martyrs and confessors have been thus enabled to glorify God, and add new triumphs to the cross of their master; but this would be foreign to my present purpose,

pose, which is to trace, in a few familiar instances, the influence which a good, and a bad conduct, must unavoidably have.

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From the very nature of the case, professors of religion, in a vain and thoughtless world, are all, more or less, conspicuous characters. The stations they occupy in the church, and the original application of the text, lead us to begin with the example of ministers of religion.

These are in an eminent sense, *cities set on an hill*. If a private wicked professor may flatter himself with the hope of escaping in a crowd, *this* a minister cannot expect. A thousand eyes are constantly upon him, and, if the music of heaven is upon his tongue, while, like Solomon's fool, he is scattering the firebrands of hell by his example, what must be the result? Language has no epithet sufficiently strong to describe the awful situation of the wretch himself, and the terrible consequences of such abominable conduct. Ministers of Christ! listen to one of your number, who, while he faithfully warns you, desires, in every syllable he utters, equally to address



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dress himself. Our peculiar business is to watch for souls; and solemn, indeed, is the motive by which fidelity and diligence are urged upon us. *The blood of souls*, if they are lost, either by our doctrines or example, will be required from us. Consider, brethren, of what unspeakable moment it is, that our lips and our lives should speak the same language. Too often, when we see the little success of our labours, our hearts are ready to die within us; what agony must we feel if our consciences tell us, that while in our pulpit we preach piety and holiness, in our houses, and in the world, we are the apostles of levity, of indolence, and of a worldly spirit? With what decency, for instance, can exhortations to lowliness, contentment, and meekness proceed from the lips of pride, peevishness, and ambition? Shall moderation and temperance be taught by him who restrains no appetite, and mortifies no lust? Shall self-denial and diligence be enforced by him who is pampered by excess, and rendered torpid by sloth? With what effect can contempt of riches be preached by

by the miser; or command of passion by the teacher who can never command himself? Would to God there were no examples of this kind, among what is called the christian ministry! but we know there are, and we cannot avoid seeing the baneful influence they shed upon the best of causes.

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On the other hand, what a lovely picture does that servant of Jesus exhibit, whose deportment manifests that his heart is in his work! Who can say to his fellow-christians, what Paul said to the Thessalonians, *ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, I have behaved myself among you who believe.* What a blessing is such a minister as this? And can it be supposed that his people will receive no good impresson from him! Shall an *angel of light* thus preach, and live, and all be darkness, and vice about him? Impossible.

Of what unspeakable importance to a community is the character of a magistrate? What a blessing is a *good*, and what a curse is a *bad* ruler of the people?

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SERM. *When the foundations, says David, are destroyed, what shall the righteous do?* When the scales of justice are broken; when the sword which should protect the innocent is pointed against them; when partiality and oppression fill the seats of judicature; when the judge upon the bench is counsel against the virtuous prisoner; what seasons of rebuke, and humiliation are then visiting the land? Transgressors are triumphant, but the wise, and the good are retiring as fast as they can from the scene of iniquity. Society is unhinged, and religion, which is not uncommonly made the stalking horse, upon such occasions, is blasphemed, and insulted, by the traitors, and hypocrites with which she is associated.

This is a melancholy picture, but there is a brighter to follow. An intelligent and upright magistrate is before us. Justice is on one side, and mercy on the other. With heartfelt sorrow he inflicts even a salutary punishment. He pities the offender, but he dares not, for the sake of the public, pass by the offence. In him despised and insulted innocence finds a refuge.



fuge. However friendless the petitioner, the complaint is never unheard; and, if possible, never unredressed. His justice can never be bribed. Interest makes no impression upon him. Even private attachment has no influence, when incompatible with public integrity. The beautiful language of Job shall finish this brief sketch. *When I went out to the gate through the city, the young men saw me, and hid themselves, and the aged arose, and stood up. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it gave witness unto me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him who had none to help him. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and diadem. I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not, I searched out: I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.*

From magistrates, the transition to parents is easy, and natural. Parents are the guardians and preceptors of the rising generation,

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neration, and to them I dedicate my next hints. But, ah! what a scene is before me? What are yonder parents about? Their children are vain, and worthless. Their minds are destitute of every serious impression. Their bosoms are swelling with pride, or bursting with envy. The language they utter is frivolous, if not criminal. *God is not in all their thoughts.* The morning, the noon, and the night pass over them, but it is all the same. A scene of impertinent idleness, or ill directed application, is continually before us. But were no instructions imparted by these parents? Did they never tell their offspring that there was a God, and another world. That they were born for nobler purposes than merely to eat, and drink. That life is too precious to be wasted in running from one public amusement, or one time-murdering visit to another. Yes; the common routine of what is called instruction has been gone through by them. Frequently they have heard that they were creatures designed for an immortal existence. That their conduct should spring from

from the influence of religious principles. That reason should govern their behaviour, restrain their passions, and subdue all their inordinate desires. All this was well, but what was the *conduct* of these instructors? What examples had the pupils almost always before them. Such a one as was calculated to counteract every advice, and obliterate every precept. Their parents lived in opposition to all they taught. They were proud, and passionate: they were peevish, and fretful: perhaps, they were mean, covetous, and unjust. In short, if they had disbelieved every thing which they told their children upon religious subjects, they could not have acted otherwise than they did. And dare such persons complain that their offspring are not wise, and good? It is possible they may, but upon what reason do they ground their complaints? How justly might their children, to every admonition retort, *Physician, heal thyself.*

But are all parents thus infatuated? Surely not. There are some whose instructions, and example, happily coincide.

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I trust some such are reading this address, and to them I would say, "Go forward, ye respectable, and generous characters, in the path of pleasure, consistency, and piety! The smiles of God are upon you, and society has not in its bosom more faithful, and useful members. Happy are the children who are thus favoured by Providence! Listen, I beseech you, ye young ones, to instructions so illustrated, and confirmed. But I may almost spare my exhortations, you are not blind to real goodness. The dignity, purity, and fitness of christian principles and precepts, supported by the persuasive lecture of a corresponding example, cannot fail to impress your hearts. May the God of all grace build you up to *glory, honour, and immortality!*"

Closely connected with the parental, is the character of a master of a family. What, my brethren, but a consistent, worthy, and steady example, is likely to win upon the affection, and secure the fidelity of servants! It is the supreme duty of all superiors to keep, with the strictest fidelity, all the engagements into which they enter  
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with those below them in the scale of social distinctions. If they do not, it is highly unreasonable to expect a fulfilment of duty on their part. It is also reasonable, and praiseworthy, to take every method to secure their affection, by making the unavoidable fatigues of servitude as little irksome as possible, and all this may be done, by a prudent and good man, without relaxing the reins of just authority, or taking servants out of that station in which, in the course of Providence they are placed. It is sincerely to be lamented that any instances occur, in which the kindness of masters, and mistresses, has been abused by licentious, dishonest, and ungrateful servants; but it should be remembered, that as all servants are not diligent, prudent, and faithful; neither are all masters kind, reasonable, or just. It is unquestionably the *interest* of both parties to deal honestly and kindly by each other, and in a majority of cases the best *example*, on either side, will have the best effects. “*Servants, obey in all things your masters, according to the flesh; not with mere eye service, as men*

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*pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven."*

In the conditions, and employments of human life, as well as the characters which men sustain, the influence of example is also very striking. A few sketches of this kind must conclude what is now to be offered. I begin with religious exercises and duties. By no rule but the example we exhibit, is it possible to ascertain whether or not religion reigns in our hearts. Upon the truly good man the sun rises, a witness that the day begins with God. He quits his bed, but before he rushes into the world, the incense of gratitude, and devotion rises to heaven. He feels his obligations, and he cannot be satisfied without an acknowledgment of those feelings. In a little time the members of his family are collected around him. The smile of religious benevolence fits on his countenance. They welcome each other to the sweet renewal of domestic intercourse, and, bending their knees at the family altar, their souls  
are



are presented, a morning sacrifice to their God. With what true composure, and dignity, where such services are heartily performed, do those who have engaged in them, go forth to the common business of life! Reason rejoices, for the diadem of religion encircles her brow. Faith is in vigorous exercise, for her eye is fixed upon heaven. The day draws to a close; the allotted portion of business and amusement is finished, and the same soul-invigorating scene is repeated: preserving grace is adored, protecting mercy is solicited, the hymn of praise ascends, and to their chambers of rest, this family of order, devotion, and love, again retire!

This is a common day; on the sabbath, in a more interesting and solemn manner they worship their Father and their God. Not only at home, but in the public assembly, they kindle the flame of piety, and celebrate the wonders of redemption, and grace. It is the day sacred to the resurrection of their Lord; sacred to the welfare of their never-dying spirits, sacred to the glory of the ever blessed God, and, with  
peculiar

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peculiar fervour they *rejoice, and are glad* in it.

Men, and christians, I will not pain you by reversing the picture. Let the infidel amuse himself with the unmeaning jargon of fate, and chance: let the inconsistent professor trifle away his sabbaths, and enter not the doors of the sanctuary; of you I hope better things. You cannot be happy *without God in the world*, and this being the case, you will be glad when it is said to you, "*Let us go to the house of the Lord.*"

The greater part of our time, however, is necessarily spent in the common affairs of mortality; and, on the theatre of business, how important is a good character and a good example? Into whose hands will concerns of trust and weight be committed? Into the hands of the man whose veracity is unimpeached, whose urbanity of manners renders intercourse a delight, and whose integrity of heart raises him above suspicion. The christian, the tradesman, and the gentleman, what a glorious union! what a finished, what an honourable

able character! It is probable, *Length of days will be in his right hand, and in his left hand, riches, and honour*; and this is certain, the favour of God will be his portion for ever. Could we behold every merchant, every tradesman, every artisan, such a character as this, what academies of usefulness, and benevolence would be found in our exchanges, our counting-houses, and our shops! Unhappily, if we fancy such things, we shall be miserably mistaken. Too often fraud, and impudence, push modesty, and honesty out of the world. O! that example had its genuine influence here, and that a deviation from moral integrity were so to blacken commercial reputation, that men might be obliged to be honest in their own defence. Imperfect, however, as it is, example has still more effect in such cases than, perhaps, in any other. Behold the man whose conduct evinces that he will overreach, and deceive, that by a thousand pitiful devices he will make haste to be rich! His schemes are defeated, his artifices are exposed, and his shattered reputation is pointed out as a beacon



SERM. beacon of caution to the surrounding  
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In a variety of other cases might examples be held up. The passionate, might be contrasted with the placid: the liar, with the speaker of truth: the revengeful and implacable, with him who is mild and ready to forgive: pride and humility: intemperance and sobriety: hypocrisy and sincerity: ostentation and modesty: patience and violence, and a multitude of other instances; but I forbear, and hasten to view the force of example in the opposite situations of prosperity, and adversity.

In prosperity, what a dreadful example is exhibited by multitudes in the world? The reins are thrown upon the neck of their lusts. Their insolence of spirit swells to the highest pitch. Like *Nabal*, they are such *sons of Belial*, that a man hardly dares to speak to them. Every appetite is indulged, and every whim is gratified. Their houses, especially, are the theatres on which their tyranny is displayed. There every one must crouch, and yield to them.

Commands

Commands are given in a tone which is fitted both to terrify, and provoke. It is the hour of prosperity, and they are despots. Let the season of adversity come, and they are equally fitted for slaves. With respect to God, and divine things, in the day of success they had other objects to engage their attention. "Religion might do very well for the poor, and, perhaps, for the middle class of people, but for them, they were vastly above it. Their spirit was too noble, their understanding was too capacious to be caught in the toils of superstition, or fettered by the interested declamations of priestcraft." These are the boasts of their prosperous hours, but mark them when the scene is reversed, when the sun has disappeared, when their coffers are empty, when their gay flatterers have forsaken them, when, stripped of their abundance, they are left to ruminate alone in dejection, and distress. Where can they repose? Real friends they had none, and pretended ones have retired as distant as possible. On every side a frightful blank presents itself. Earth has forsaken them,  
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SERM. and in heaven they have none to pity:  
 V. *The wages of sin is death; the day of grace*  
 is gone, and *He who created them will shew*  
*them no favour.*

But what do we see yonder? A sincere honest christian in circumstances of great outward affliction. He once knew better days, but unavoidable misfortunes have reduced him very low. Sorrowful he must be, but he does not despair. Like holy Job, he can look back on the time when it was his delight and glory to relieve distress; *to be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame;* and even now he does not murmur, nor *charge his God foolishly.* He wants, it may be, almost every external accommodation, but he has a cordial within him which supports his fainting spirits. He knows his heavenly Father is wise, and good. If he sees fit to deprive him of earthly comforts, he is fully satisfied he will not take from him divine consolations. His earthly friends may fail him, but his heavenly friend lives for ever. The changes of time have had no other effect than to induce him to look forward with joy and hope to  
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an eternal world. Life and death, things present, and things to come, all are his, he is the servant of Jesus, and Jesus is the Son of God!

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If the influence of example is so powerful and extensive, shall we satisfy ourselves with a cold indifference as to the part we are acting? Shall we dare to be vain, and criminal, and yet hope for peace of conscience, for friendship with God, and for the bliss of another world? Preposterous expectation! No, my brethren, we must imbibe the spirit, we must imitate the example of Christ, or we are none of his. We none of us, can live merely *to*, or *for* ourselves. Let us, therefore, as in the sight of God, be circumspect, and watchful over our hearts, and lives. If we are humble, and diligent, we cannot wholly fail. *God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace unto the humble: the lowly he will guide in judgment, and to the meek he will teach his way.*

SERMON

## SERMON VI.

## ON THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

I KINGS XX. 11.

*And the King of Israel, answered and said, tell him, let not him that girdeth on his Harness boast himself, as he that putteth it off.*

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THE advantage, in the whole of the transaction to which these words belong, is clearly on the side of Ahab, the King of Israel. To the insolent demand of the Syrian monarch, which is related in this chapter, the most soothing, and prudent answer had been returned: the required acknowledgment was made in the fullest terms; *My Lord, O King, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have.* Ample as the concession was,  
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it was not enough to satisfy the rapacity of Benhadad. With all the littleness, as well as insolence of an encroaching soul, he rises in his demands in proportion as he thinks he may do it with impunity. The prostrate neighbour must be crushed, or his contemptible, jealous spirit cannot be at rest. Thus it frequently happens, that a tame submission, to unprovoked insults, answers no other end than the production of fresh injuries. It appears that Ahab, acted like a true guardian of his country; for however ready he might be to answer for himself, he did not think he was at liberty to dispose of the freedom and property of his subjects. The second message of his enemy involved their interests as well as his, and he, very properly consults with them upon the answer to be returned. The advice they gave was worthy of true patriots; and the reply which, in consequence, Benhadad received, though firm, was couched in moderate, and respectful terms. “*Tell my Lord the King,*” says Ahab, “*all that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first, I will do, but this*  
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*thing I may not do."* Full of insult, arrogance, and vanity, is the third pitiful menace of the despot of Syria. "*The gods do so to me, and more also if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.*" The reply of Ahab to this domineering threat is contained in our text, and its manly good sense, raises him higher above his adversary than the victories which he afterwards obtained over him. His cause was a good one, and full of that confidence which such a consciousness inspired, he saw no reason to despair of its issue. The monarch of Syria was peevish and passionate, like an angry child, and the King of Israel, notwithstanding his superior power, smiles at his petulance.

With a delicate but keen sarcasm he reminds him, that *the battle is not always to the strong*; that, at any rate, the result of the contest was yet unknown. *Let not him who girdeth on his harness, boast himself, as he that putteth it off.* It is true Samaria is besieged, but it is not taken; therefore, let Benhadad reserve the fulness of

of his triumph till the victory is really obtained. It is matter of regret that Ahab did not always behave with the prudence and moderation which in this instance he displayed.

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Many useful remarks might be made upon the several circumstances of this story, and applied as directories in common life; at present I shall not dwell upon them, but use the words of the text as happily descriptive of the *nature*, and *conclusion* of the christian life. They will suggest a caution to each of us, not to *be high-minded but fear*: never to think ourselves so much out of danger as to remit our vigilance, or quit our post. In every stage of mortality the christian should keep this salutary motto in his eye. *Let not him who girdeth ON his harness, boast himself, as he that putteth it OFF.* If an apology should be thought necessary for this use of the words, it may easily be found in those many passages in the sacred writings, and especially in the New Testament, in which the conflicts, and close of a religious life are illustrated by military allusions. In

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several particulars a parallel may be run between the life of an earthly, and a heavenly warrior. To give a brief view of these shall be the object of my

I. Remark. The military profession is of such a nature as necessarily to withdraw a man from most of the common concerns, and occupations of life. The supreme, primary law of the soldier, is implicit, and unreserved obedience to the commands of his general. When he understands his orders, he is neither to question nor dispute, but obey. The grand object of a soldier's pursuit is securing the approbation of his chief, for to that only he looks for lasting happiness. Wherever he may happen to be stationed, whether in a pleasant or painful post, he is on no account to quit his ground. The substitute who relieves him, the execution of the service to which he has been appointed, or the weapon which lays him in the dust, are his only means of discharge. Till one or the other of these displaces him, pleasure may present her allurements, and danger may



may thunder her alarms, but no impression is to be made upon his conduct. A *life* of fidelity and perseverance would be esteemed nothing, if, towards the close of it, he *put off his harness*, before the time.

Like the soldier, the servant of Jesus should withdraw, with a noble contempt, from many of the allurements, and blandishments of the world. His time is too precious to be spent in the pursuit of objects, trifling in themselves, and generally so opposite to the genius, and spirit of his heavenly vocation. The grand object of the christian's life, the first wish of his heart, if he deserves the name he bears, will be the ensuring the favour of God. That he may do this, he has an exercise to learn; and the only way to render it easy, is to learn it betimes, and to practise it with frequency, and perseverance.

The *harness* of the christian warfare should be put on *betimes*. It is never too early to enter on the path which leads to heaven. It is never too early to form habits of firmness and self-denial. In the progress of life we shall stand in need of all

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our courage, and resolution; and, if our lives should be taken from us at an early period, when we have not even begun our exercise, with what face shall we appear before the captain of our salvation? Whatever may be the true character of military manœuvres, and employment, of this we are certain, that the discipline of the *christian soldier* is both difficult, and important. It should, therefore, not only be begun *betimes*, but be practised with *frequency*, and *care*. Perhaps they rarely do, but soldiers undoubtedly might pass many days without repeating their exercise, and no inconvenience be felt, but not so the christian warrior. His whole life is not too long to teach him his duty, and to render him alert, and dexterous in its discharge. The genuine *soldier of Jesus* will want few arguments to engage him to his work, for he feels that his happiness is never so great as when he is directly employed in his master's service.

II. It is our *duty*, and will be our *unspeakable advantage*, to put on this christian

tian *harness*. We may, undoubtedly, if we are so disposed, waste our time, misapply our talents, and despise our mercies. We may, after a long season of idleness, or criminality, be wholly ignorant of the grand business of life, and when hoary hairs are upon us, be reduced to the poor hope of stealing into the grave unnoticed either by God or by man. But this, my fellow disciples, will not be permitted with impunity. The season of probation goes on, and no thunderbolt is darted upon the thoughtless, or daring delinquent; but the close of such a career will not be peace. The *unprofitable servant* shall be brought to an account, and though he gives up what he originally received, he shall not go unpunished. We are placed in this world as servants to him who made us. To consider God as an householder, and master, is a thought which lies at the foundation of our duty. He has made us capable of activity, and usefulness. A great majority of our race are placed in situations where the exertion of all their abilities is necessary to secure the well being



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of themselves, and families. To put on the christian harness, therefore, is to discharge our duty as under the inspection of Heaven; to go through the common occurrences of life with a frequent reference to the notice and friendship of the Great Supreme; to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts; to erect in our bosoms an altar of unfeigned devotion, and to lay upon it, with steadiness and regularity, the sacrifice of humility and contrition, dependence and hope, gratitude and praise.

Should we be placed in situations of extreme difficulty and trial, situations in which for the sake of God and a good conscience, we must oppose any of the unrighteous practices and demands of men, we must then, in a more appropriate sense, gird on the christian harness. *Counting it all joy when we thus fall into tribulation,* we must take with composure the *spoiling of our goods*, and not think, *even our lives dear unto us*, when brought into competition with the faithful discharge of our duty. It was thus that the son of *Amram* distinguished

guished himself, when esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The afflic-

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tions of the people of God were preferred, in his wife and virtuous estimation, to the temporary, though gilded pleasures of a licentious court. It is thus that in innumerable instances the army of martyrs have wrought righteousness, obtained promises, and stopped the mouths of lions. In all situations it is our duty, as followers of a suffering Saviour, to have our loins girt about, our feet shod, and our harness on. We are bid to expect tribulation, and the armour of God is provided for the express purpose of enabling us to resist the attack.

But this is not all: it will be our present advantage, to put on this christian harness. The rewards of religion are not confined to futurity. Admitting that, sometimes, the painful feelings of the careless, and, even wicked man, are painted, by the ministers of religion, in colours too strong; yet this is incontestably true, that no joy upon earth is so pure and perfect as that

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which springs from a review of virtuous deeds,—when conscience testifies, that in *simplicity and godly sincerity* we have discharged our duty. Thrice happy is the man who can frequently retire into the sanctuary of his own heart, and there participate of this sublime pleasure—who, in the silence of his closet can oft go unto God, to *God his exceeding joy!* No idea was ever more erroneous than that the happiness of the good man does not begin till the close of the present life. All the proceedings of Providence are, with respect to us, gradual. The arts, the sciences, every improvement of mental and material happiness proceeds upon the same principle. We are therefore, if our works are acceptable to God, *now to eat our bread with cheerfulness, and drink our wine with a merry heart.* Virtue and felicity cannot be separated. Hope is the anticipation of happiness, and the retrospect of a good life, is heaven begun in the present world.

III. The *conclusion* of a life of trial and discipline is really a matter of joy. The end



end crowns the work. If we succeed ever so well in the preparatory steps, yet if through negligence, mistake, or want of perseverance, we fail in the completion of our design, chagrin and disappointment must inevitably be our portion. Unsuccessful terminations of projects which had employed much of the time, and engaged, to a very considerable degree, the expectations and hopes of men, have not been uncommon in human life. The labour of months, perhaps of years, has been frustrated, just at the period in which a favourable issue was expected. Bitter, in such cases, is the disappointment which tortures the bosom, and sometimes, fatal are the consequences which follow. A plan accomplished, is out of the power of uncertainty, but in every previous step, probability is all that we can boast. Our satisfaction, at the conclusion of any undertaking will, undoubtedly, be in proportion to the difficulties we have surmounted, and the advantages which success has secured. In one respect, the analogy between natural and moral undertakings, fails—in the former,

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former, we often take previous steps which, though good in themselves, fail in promoting the cause they were intended to serve, but not so in the latter—we have never to lament, or undo, a truly virtuous acquirement. In every possible view of it, the conclusion of a life of trial is matter of joy. Notwithstanding it is true, that to the established christian the ways of religion are *ways of pleasantness, and all her paths paths of peace*, yet it ought not to be dissembled, that there are considerable difficulties to be expected and encountered in a virtuous and religious course. Self-denial is always a difficult task, and yet without a considerable portion of it, we cannot be denominated the true followers of Jesus. In that intercourse which we must maintain with the world, many instances will occur, in which, if we do not oppose the practice, we ought to retreat from the company of our fellow creatures. To do either of these, will expose us to the reproach of stiffness and singularity. It will, in some cases, be incompatible with our present advantage; but to comply is absolute

absolute criminality. In such circumstances, flesh and blood are not to be consulted. No parley is to be held with temptation. The path of duty is clear, and happy is that professor who proves himself, upon the whole, an undeviating traveller.

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It is not, merely, *once* or *twice* that we shall be thus exposed: if our lives are of the common length, we shall *frequently* be called upon, to vindicate the honour of godliness, and manifest its influence upon our hearts. Remembering this, whenever we have obtained a victory, let no indecent and insolent triumph swell our bosoms. While life continues, enemies, either from within or without, will annoy us. To rejoice without trembling, is the privilege only of another world. When the *last enemy* is overcome, then may the christian soldier put off his harness with safety and honour. It is impossible that the conclusion of any undertaking should afford such ample matter for joy, as the honourable close of a good life. Labour and anxiety are utterly at an end. In the warfare of life,
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fears and apprehensions will frequently assail the stoutest champion; but when the last conflict has bound the laurel upon the brow, fears and apprehensions vanish for ever. Sin is no more, and sorrow, its constant companion, is annihilated. The dread of failure is over, and the loss of the divine favour is no longer possible. Previous to this, temptation had assaulted and prevailed, *a fearful looking for of fiery indignation* had been its necessary consequence, but now temptation can assault no more. The river of death has been passed, and the "christian hero" is landed on the opposite bank. The body, with all its weaknesses and follies, is dropped, and the soul unfettered, and at full liberty, is expatiating in the pure celestial freedom of the kingdom of God! This thought leads directly to the

IV. Observation, that this joy can be felt *only* at the close of life. No other season admits of full repose. While the enemy keeps the field, the soldier must not put off his harness. While the christian lives

lives his conflict cannot be at an end. Inward corruptions, and outward snares will call for his vigilance, and, frequently, put his fortitude to the trial. As *Solon* would pronounce no man happy till his death, so the full eulogium of the christian can be given, only when he has finished his career.

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Figure to yourselves the spectacle which our subject naturally suggests. Behold, at the close of a series of hazardous and toilsome campaigns, an old soldier retiring from his hard service! Dismissed with the applause of his general, and crowned with the love of his country, the battered veteran is seeking some peaceful abode. His labours are concluded, and the remnant of his days is to be spent in honourable rest. With what honest pride he points to the scars, which are so many proofs of the fidelity of his service. With what full delight he puts off his harness for the *last* time. His limbs are withered with age, but his eye still sparkles at the remembrance of well earned reputation. Suppose this venerable warrior a patriot  
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and a christian, and why should he not be both? and something like this will be his language: "My country is saved, and these aged eyes behold it still a land of liberty! Many a hard conflict have I sustained; but the *God of Hosts* has not permitted me to fall. These old arms are incapable of further service, but thanks to heaven, further service is unnecessary. My object is fully accomplished. I lay down my sword with greater joy than I ever took it up. The vineyard of peace be henceforward my residence, the calm duties of the citizen my employment, and the grateful effusions of humble piety my chief joy."

This, it may be said, is a picture of imagination; true—but it is a picture suggested by the text, and that it may not appear romantic, I shall finish it with a sketch from real history. In the full prospect of a partial trial, and of an unjust sentence, a soldier of *Jesus* thus writes to his friend:—  
*"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have*



*have kept the faith."* Thus does this veteran in the cause of Christ utter the honest boast of his conscience; and he does not stop here, with joyful anticipation, he dwells on the reward to which he looked forward. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them who love his appearing."* God grant that in the near views of an eternal world, we may be able to make use of similar language.

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As an *improvement* of this subject,

i. Let us never indulge a lofty opinion of ourselves. Let us never think that we have already attained, or that we are already perfect. To begin is not the same thing as to finish. Many a soldier has put on his harness with great gaiety and promise, who has proved an arrant coward in the day of battle. The sooner we put on the harness of the gospel, the better; the christian discipline is not learned in a day. Let us be extremely careful not to stop, and rest satisfied with any trifling and low

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attainments.

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attainments. Life is continually changing; every change calls for new vigilance, because every change exposes us to new and untried temptations. *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*, said the Captain of our Salvation, and this is true, both in a natural, and moral sense. Remembering that we are passing through a world of perils and temptations, let us grasp the sword of the spirit in our hands. Feeble and helpless as we are, prayer and supplication will make us strong. It is, therefore, our duty, and will be our highest advantage, to be constant and  *fervent in prayer*. God is all-sufficient, and he has assured us in the most solemn and express manner, that if we call upon him with humility, in the exercise of faith and repentance, he will hear, answer, and support us.

2. Let us never think our warfare is accomplished, or our race run. If, while there is life there is hope for the pardon of sin; so, while there is life, there are sins to forsake, and duties to perform. Particularly, let us mind our own business. Multitudes

titudes are acquainted with every body's concerns, and characters, but their own; and if this were either kindly intentioned, or could be of advantage, there would be some apology for it. If one *could* hereafter answer for another, and *would* do it, this meddling temper might find an excuse; but this, we are assured, is impossible, we must every one of us give an account of *himself* unto God.

3. Let us constantly look unto JESUS, the great *captain of our salvation*: it is under his banner we are enlisted—as *good soldiers*, we are to *endure hardness*; as faithful subjects, we are to show unlimited obedience. At our general's command, we are to put *on* our *harness*; and whenever he pleases to order us from our post, we are quietly to put it *off*. Pure and innocent as *Jesus* was, he was *made perfect through sufferings*. Let us not, therefore, be disgusted, or cast down, when trouble falls to our lot. *Let patience have its perfect work*. In the path of duty, if trials assail us, and if, by Divine aid, we bear them well, those trials will be sanctified,



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and made to contribute to our unspeakable advantage. *Jesus* should in all cases be our example: He endured the cross, despising the pain and shame annexed to it. He sought not his own glory, nor did he come to perform his own will.—*Learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart*, was the language not only of his lips, but of his whole life. Let us, my beloved, follow him as closely as possible—this is certain, that the nearer *our* conduct resembles *his* conduct, the greater will be our honour and happiness.

4. Let us look with a proper indifference upon present things, and forward to the season of putting off our harness. In such a case as this, death will be no object of terror. We shall not be so fascinated by a few fertile spots in the wilderness, as to forget the *land which flows with milk and honey*. Perhaps we have triumphed over many an enemy; we know that before we can reach our Father's house, there is one enemy who must triumph over us. In what part of our path we may meet him is uncertain, but we are sure that if we suffer

suffer the cares, or the vanities of the present state wholly to engross our hearts, it is not merely temporal death that he will inflict. Let us frequently think on the consequences of dying: Let us labour to obtain *a good hope through grace*, that they may be favourable to us, and then the approach of dissolution will fill us with little alarm. We know that *our Redeemer liveth, and that though worms must destroy this body, yet that in our immortal flesh we shall see God.* Knowing this, let us now put on the *whole armour of God*. Let us be sober, faithful, and vigilant. The hour of conflict is present, but let not our spirits droop, let not our weapons be wrested from us. *In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

## SERMON VII.

## JOSHUA'S COMMAND TO THE SUN.

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Delivered January 1, 1797.

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JOSHUA X. 12.

*Sun! stand thou still!*

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**I**T will easily be recollected that these uncommon words were uttered by Joshua, when Adonizedeck and his numerous confederates were flying before him, in the neighbourhood of Gibeon. He wished for a protraction of day-light, that the victory might be so complete and decisive, as to reduce the future conflicts of Israel. It is said, in the following verses, *the sun stood still, and the moon staid, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.* To support the account, a reference

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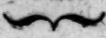
ence is then made to a former writer, who had recorded the circumstance in these words: *Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.* The writer of the book of Joshua then adds, *and there was no day like that, before it, nor after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.*

Not a single enemy of Revelation, who has gone any length into the subject, has forgotten this story. The stopping of the sun in the heavens has appeared to them a circumstance so incredible, as to warrant the opening of all their batteries of wit and argument against it.

To parry the blow, and take off the edge of the attack, many ingenious solutions have been attempted by the defenders of the sacred history. Some Jewish *Rabbis* have thought, that after the sun was gone down, God placed in the heavens another luminous body, the same in appearance, and which afforded light like the sun. It is evident that by this solution nothing is

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gained. It is only denying the miracle which scripture relates, and inventing another to supply its place. Some christian writers of great acumen and respectability, have adopted a conjecture which, I believe, originated in Germany, that the whole circumstance of the sun's standing still, is only a poetical way of relating Joshua's victory; which they suppose was obtained at that season of the year in which the days are at the longest. To support this notion they maintain, that the Book of *Jasher* was a collection of popular national poems, the writers of which, like the poets of all countries, used fictions to embellish their narratives, and decorate the actions of their favourite heroes. All this is very ingenious, but, unfortunately, it stands upon a very slight foundation. There is no proof, supposing the Jews to have had any such books among them, that the Book of *Jasher* was of that sort, and if it had, I think it would hardly have been referred to as an authority, by the writer of the Book of *Joshua*, which is not a poem, but a grave history. Some have asserted, as they say upon the authority of the Hebrew text, that

that it was not the Sun and Moon that halted not to go down, but their beams or rays. This is liable to the same objection as the first solution, it is only changing the miracle; and it appears to me not to have the authority upon which it professes to rest: the word in Joshua is that which is commonly used for the sun, and therefore it is very arbitrary to make it, in this place, signify merely its rays.

Many other conjectures might be mentioned, but I forbear to recite them. Criticism is far from being the main object in these discourses; I shall, therefore, only observe, that in my opinion, all endeavours to explain a miracle, are labour lost. The history does not profess to record this, and other miraculous circumstances, merely as wonderful events; but as direct interpositions of God for particular purposes. If it is admitted that God *may* so interpose, and that the event in question is not *above* his power to produce, (neither of which a consistent believer in revelation can deny) then it will follow, that while we admit the facts, we do not pretend to explain the manner in which they were brought about.

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There is no absurdity in this, for it is the very nature of a miracle to be contrary to what we know of the established order of things. In the case before us; surely, the God who created the sun can govern it at his pleasure. Surely, the Almighty can work a local, as well as a general miracle. He who makes the light, and creates the darkness, can, if he please, make a partial alteration in the usual distribution of either, without being obliged to extend the consequences of such an alteration to places and persons who have no concern in it. The darkness at our Lord's crucifixion, affected only the land of Judea; and I can see no greater difficulty in supposing that the miraculous light which was here given to Joshua and his army, affected only them; and therefore, would not, by occasioning darkness in other places, disturb and perplex the rest of the world.

I shall now use the words of the text as a *motto* for a new year's discourse.

SUN! STAND THOU STILL!

The years of mortality are measured by the progress of the sun through those portions

tions of space into which Astronomy has divided the visible heavens. Philosophy has corrected the error of common language, and made it evident that it is the earth, and not the sun which moves. This, however, makes no difference in the effect produced in the natural world; nor does it alter, in any respect, the moral and devotional thoughts which may be drawn from it. The same wisdom, power, and goodness are exerted in either case, and, therefore, in the remainder of this discourse, I shall conform to the popular and scriptural modes of speech upon the subject.

In fact, the sun, except by a miracle, can never stand still. With us, years begin and end: but that glorious luminary, and all his shining companions, pursue an uniform, and hitherto, untermiated journey. With the Almighty there is neither beginning of days, nor end of years; but all the works of his hands, with which we are acquainted, are finite and temporary. Time is the name by which the duration of human life is described; and, a thousand circumstances feelingly tell us, that time

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is both unceasing, and rapid in its flight. The animal frame is never stationary. It advances, stage after stage, till it reaches the point beyond which it cannot go, Multitudes never arrive at this final boundary; but when it is attained, it is universally fatal. Signs of decay are long before exhibited, but then decay becomes dissolution. The emaciated frame drops into the dust. It rejoins the mass of common earth, and, in this world, is visible no more. In this respect we differ from the world in which we dwell. The face of the earth is every year renewed. The falling leaves of autumn, and the frosts and snows of winter, are succeeded by the blossoms, the flowers, and vigorous herbage of spring and summer. But when once the human tree has been whitened with the blossoms of the grave, it buds and vegetates no more. The sun continues to rise and set, but the eyes which surveyed it are closed for ever; and the tongue which was often ready to utter language similar to that of the text, is buried in eternal silence. Is this the uniform



uniform lot of man? Then *we* cannot be excepted. When we have witnessed a few more revolutions of the sun, it will, with us, stand still for ever. This is not a subject over which it becomes us to sleep.

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Life has frequently been compared to a day, and when the usual length is granted, it is not an improper comparison. Like the day, life is divided into three grand periods; the beginning, the middle, and the close. In one case we say the morning, the noon, and the evening; and in the other, childhood, maturity, and old age. The resemblance between these periods has been so often traced that I shall not now dwell upon it, but dismiss the thought with one general remark, that as the longest day has its night, so the longest life ends in the grave. The evening is not the time to begin an undertaking which requires strength and day-light; nor is old age the fit season for beginning the formation of the virtuous and religious character. A master expects his servant not to loiter in the prime of the day, but

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to apply himself to his business ; and in that case, some of its closing minutes may be allotted for relaxation, and repose. If the early hours are wasted, it is scarcely probable they can be retrieved : at any rate, it will occasion hurry, labour, and self-reproach to the last. It is easy to apply these common thoughts to that moral connection which subsists between God and man.

Life is but a scanty portion of time, and though multitudes of the vain and vicious, seem to think they cannot get rid of it too fast, yet to the reflecting and good, every moment is inconceivably precious. They know that immortality is to commence when time is over. They find that every day brings with it a multitude of duties and cares. They are aware that it is not a matter, either of little difficulty, or of little importance, to govern their own spirits. It is a considerable attainment to keep the mind in a truly christian frame—to be able to lie down at night, religiously indifferent, so far as our own interest only is involved, whether we awake again or not. This is a state of mind after which every follower

follower of Jesus should aim; but a few random wishes, a few formal, hasty prayers, a few half-formed, and ill-kept resolutions, will not secure its possession. Peace with God, with conscience, and with the world, will cost a far higher price. I shall think myself happy, indeed, if, by the divine blessing, I may assist any of my readers, in acquiring, what will contribute so essentially to their happiness: a temper of mind more conformable to that of the Holy Jesus; a due sense of the importance of time, as leading to immortality; and an entire resignation to the appointments of an infinitely wise and gracious God.

I observe

1. The *beginning* of a year is a proper season for this purpose. It is not necessary that the sun should stand still, to enable us to make a moral pause. The human mind can reflect and anticipate whenever it pleases. The goodness of God has spared us through the space of another year. Let us exercise our powers, and put those questions which our situation will suggest.

As



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As *Aaron* once stood between the dead and the living, in the camp in the wilderness, so we are, this instant, within a few hours of that precise moment, which separated the old, from the new-year. A new set of sabbaths are now opening. This year we begin in the *house of God*, if, in the course of it, we are called out of time into eternity, may it prove to us *none other than the gate of heaven!*

Amongst tradesmen, the close, and the beginning of the year, are frequently the season of settling their accounts. The sun of commerce seems to loiter, while the books are summed up, and the balance of the year is struck.

To every mind the opening of the year gives an impulse of greater or fainter strength. It is a period frequently chosen for entering upon new studies, commencing new engagements in life, and actually beginning to put in practice the plans of former months. Just before it commences, the days, in our part of the world, have sunk to their lowest point, and are again extending their limits. Even amidst the  
snows

snows and frosts of winter, we seem to start afresh, and to have a new object towards which we are all to press forward. In one sense, *old things are passed away, and all things seem to become new.*

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While every thing about us is thus agitated, and roused into action; while hope buds afresh, and enterprise stands on tip-toe, ready, even to arrest the sun in its course, rather than be thwarted in its plans, shall the soul stagnate and become putrid? Shall no kind angel *trouble the moral pool*, and infuse a new portion of health and celestial vivacity through the torpid mind? Forbid it, Almighty Creator of the sun! that we should remain insensible to its enlightening and vivifying rays. May the morning of the year shed its friendly dew drops upon us: may we shake off our disgraceful inactivity, and stand ready to hail the sun of righteousness, bursting, in all his glories, on our benighted hearts. The night of the last year is gone. The day of the present year is not only at hand, but actually arrived. Let us improve its light, let us work while it is day,

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for

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for we know not how soon the season of labour may finally close.

What have we been doing? What are we about now? and what are our intentions for futurity? These are the questions which lie before us. No human characters are unmixed. If upon an honest enquiry, we can conclude that in ours, good preponderates, let us be thankful. It is grace which makes us to differ from multitudes. Let us resolve, in dependence on that grace, that nothing shall be wanting on our parts, to render as perfect as possible every thing truly good in our hearts and lives. If conscience tells us that in the last year, we were weighed in the balances of heaven, and found greatly wanting, let not a moment be lost. We know not how soon the hand writing upon the wall may inform us, *our days are numbered, and finished*. For time lost, let double diligence be exerted. For mercies abused and God affronted, let penitence humble us in the dust. For transgressions committed, let the activity of reformation evince the sincerity of repentance. For favours continued amidst so  
much



much ingratitude, let new obedience be manifested. For offers of redemption so often reiterated, let the ardour of devotion glow in the heart, and the purity of an amended practice, appear in all the conversation. Thus let us sanctify the opening year, and though we cannot stop the sun in his course, let him witness, as he rolls along, our improvement in every good word and work.

2. If we could actually command the sun to stand still, how pernicious would be the consequences! When we attempt to mend the plans of Providence, a little thought will convince us of our incompetency to the task. Suppose, for instance, that even a skilful farmer had the power of regulating the weather; is it likely that his sagacity would equal the wisdom of God? Would he distribute light and heat in such just proportions as we find them actually communicated? But besides the weakness of man, avarice and malice would often interfere and make bad worse. Self-interest would plead for an enlargement of our own produce, and a diminution of our neighbour's. This proceeds also upon the

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supposition, that only *one* human being at a time, possessed these extraordinary powers; but if they were bestowed upon one, why should they be withheld from others? Admit that *all* were thus privileged, what confusion and anarchy must be the consequence! Who could adjust such incompatible interests? Who could balance such jarring wills and authorities? The empire of *chaos* would at once return, and the foundations of nature and reason be totally destroyed. Thanks be to God, we are not thus left to the misery of having our own rash and imbecile projects carried into execution. The random wishes of a vain, a proud, or a thoughtless worm, are not to govern the world. To the general laws of nature and Providence we must all submit. If infinite power and wisdom controul or suspend them in any instance, that power and wisdom will take care of the consequences. Partial good will not be produced at the expence of general evil. What is a benefit to one nation, or one individual, shall be no detriment to the rest. Miracles, in the hand of God, will answer wise and excellent purposes; but

but left to the caprice of man, they would produce only confusion and ruin.

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3. While we contemplate the magnitude and influence of the heavenly bodies, let us rejoice in the power and immutability of God. How easily might an increase or diminution of the distance between the sun and our globe, prove our destruction? By its nearer approach, we might be burnt to ashes; and by its farther remove, be frozen to ice. By the power and immutability of Jehovah, these immense celestial bodies are kept in precisely the situation in which they are so highly advantageous. That sacred impulse which originally launched them into their appointed orbits, continues to operate to the present hour. From these orbits they never deviate. Unwearied and uniform is their course. The light and heat which they receive from the central flames of the sun, they transmit to thousands and thousands of worlds. The Divine counsels, no change can affect. Like JEHOVAH himself, they are sure throughout all generations.

As God is in the natural, so he is in the moral world. His purposes and his promises



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mises are equally sure, and, therefore, let what will take place, all is safe and right upon the whole. Let the stars fall from the firmament! let the sun be stopped in his career, or even be torn from his place in the system! the Creator of the sun is the same for ever! Whatever convulsions take place, the Lord of the universe reigns, and, in the issue of things, he will appear glorious in all his proceedings.

4. Let us frequently look forward to that solemn period when the sun will for ever stop. A greater than Joshua, will then be manifested; and for greater purposes than the General of Israel had in view, will the course of the sun be finally arrested. He will not then be commanded to witness the slaughter of an idolatrous army, but the last triumph of the heavenly Joshua, over sin and death. The destruction of all evil will precede the time when the sun himself shall be plucked from his station; and the glory of *God and the Lamb*, supercede the necessity of any inferior vehicle of light.

Illustrious and happy season! how big with awful and delightful consequences  
is

is thy approach! How full of terror to the wicked; how rich with consolation to the good! Remember, my dear readers, in one or the other of these classes *we* must finally be found. However splendid the scene we are contemplating, we must be actors in it. However distant it may seem, perhaps another new-year's day may not come, before we shall be laid in the grave, where there is *neither knowledge nor device*. Before we shall quit that grave, the angel of God will have descended, and uttered the irrevocable oath, that, *Time shall be no longer*. Let every flying year impress us with the thought, that to this point we are all hastening. A few more suns, at most, and we have done with every thing below. Earth is vanished, and eternity and heaven are opening upon us. The volume of life will be unrolled, and to find our names registered there, will be the only circumstance which can give us satisfaction.

5. Let us, in the mean time, rejoice in the *sun of righteousness*, and pray for the unlimited diffusion of his beams. "Glorious luminary!" let our hearts exclaim, "enlighten all our darkness, subdue our cor-

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ruptions: melt down our prejudices, and complete thy moral victory, by bringing into subjection every thought of our hearts. Glorious luminary! stop not thy course. Rise upon the nations with *healing in thy wings*. Dissipate every moral cloud. Upon the people who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, may a glorious light be poured out. Take away the scales from every sinful eye. Thaw the ice which benumbs the cold and insensible heart. Tear away the veil of Jewish unbelief. Bring in the fulness of the Gentile outcasts; and may heaven and earth united, exhibit but one pure, harmonious, immortal family."

Thus, my friends, there is a *SUN* whose progress we shall never wish to arrest. Thanks be to God, we have long been blessed with his light. Heaven forbid that we should choose darkness rather than light. If we do, there can be but one reason for it, and that reason our Saviour has pointed out,—*our deeds are evil*.

Known only to God is the human heart. It is not our province to condemn others, but to correct ourselves. Whatever are

our



our characters, the new-year has a voice to us all. To the wicked it says, "repent of thy sins, or the door of mercy will be shut." To the wavering, "hesitate no longer, choose *this day* whom thou wilt serve." To the backsliding, "consider thy ways, return unto *thy first love*, there is yet forgiveness and hope." To the delaying, "thoughtless mortal, be wise, *while it is called to-day*, listen to the voice of thy God." To the humble, "be of good cheer, I am with thee, to raise up thy soul, which is bowed down; to comfort thy spirit which trembles at my word." To the confirmed and vigorous saint, "*Well done, good and faithful servant*"; another year has witnessed thy fidelity; another year has brightened thy crown: hold on, and in a little while the fulness of thy glory shall come.

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Listen, christians, to the warning and consoling voice of the new-year, and in whatever circumstances you begin it, take care that, in its progress, you get nearer to God. The nearer the better, and when nearest, then best of all.

SERMON

## SERMON VIII.

## ON THE NATURE AND POWER OF HABIT.

PROVERBS XXII. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go,  
and when he is old he will not depart  
from it.*

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THE power of habit is the principle upon which the wise man here argues. It is this which authorises the maxim ;—that that to which we are early accustomed, it is highly probable we shall not forsake in future life. Train up a child in the path of holiness, and, most likely, his hoary head will be a crown of glory unto him. There are exceptions to all human rules. The best education sometimes fails; but as to the general principle on

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on which the text is founded, and to the influence of which I mean now to direct your thoughts, there is no exception. The force of habit has in all ages been felt by the children of men.

Custom and habit are sometimes confounded, but they are not exactly the same thing. They differ not in kind but degree. The same action very often repeated forms a habit; and when this has been rivetted by time, experience warrants the conclusion, that almost a miracle must take place before a habit can be changed. We have a proverb which forcibly marks the opinion entertained of the strength of habit; Habit is second nature.

It is a curious speculation to trace the progress, from the commencement of custom, to the confirmation of habit. When it is confirmed, it is scarcely possible to distinguish it from instinct. As one operates upon the mere animal, so does the other upon the reasonable nature. There is a very close analogy between bodily and moral habits. In both cases there are generally aversions to overcome in the beginning.

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ginning. Many things which in time are eaten and drank with extreme pleasure, are exceedingly nauseous when first tasted. Opium, amongst the Turks, and tobacco in European nations, are instances. At first, only small quantities can possibly be borne. By degrees, aversion decreases; it wholly disappears. A slight degree of pleasure is the next step; this pleasure grows stronger; it reaches a certain height, and declines; but at last, if the usual indulgence is cut off, the slavery of habit is fully manifest.

This will be found to be a pretty accurate picture of the progress of moral, as well as bodily habits. Except those who are nursed, from the first dawn of reason, in the lap of iniquity, the mind revolts at what is greatly wrong. With slow and timid steps the path of transgression is ventured upon, but when reluctance is overcome pleasure succeeds. The pursuit of pleasure is natural to man. A love of it is deeply rooted in the human heart. On this vulnerable side temptation makes its assaults. The bait is richly gilded. The  
flower

flower is so sweet and beautiful, that the thorn it conceals is not at all suspected. Many a bitter pang is endured, and the cheated expectant of bliss is again and again disappointed. By degrees, the sensibility of the soul is blunted. What at first cost a severe struggle, is attended with little or no pain. We grow familiarised with transgression. We play upon *the hole of the asp*, till we venture to put our hands upon *the den of the cockatrice*. We fancy that our deviations from purity are but small vices. We suppose, that though we have formerly yielded, in future we shall be able to rally our virtues, and vanquish the enemy, by whom we must admit, we have now and then been foiled. Thus we go on, step by step, and at last find, to our shame and sorrow, that it is in vain to struggle against a bondage we cannot break. Every compliance has added a new rivet to our fetters. Every effort to get free has acted in a twofold manner against us: it has encreased the weight of our chain, and diminished our power of resistance. Instead of being hateful, sin has become pleasant. When our vices, and indulgences

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dulgences are enumerated, it may be said, this is their condition, and they *love to have it so*. Their evil habits are actually become a part of themselves, and so firmly are they fixed that, perhaps, to extirpate the vices, the people must be destroyed.

History presents us with many a sad picture of human frailty and vice, but it is worthy of remark, that she has never given us a character completely vicious at first. It is by *degrees* that the outline, even of wickedness, is filled up. It requires time to harden the heart, to lull the faithful remonstrances of conscience, and to blunt the tender sensibilities of humanity. When the prophet predicted to Hazael, the barbarities which he was to perpetrate, he started at the image of his future self, and, I doubt not, with real horror exclaimed, *Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things!* It is recorded of Domitian, that the infernal temper which ultimately led him to delight in the tortures of men, was kindled and nourished in his youth, by pulling off the limbs, and stabbing the bodies of flies, and other defenceless animals.

By



By habits of cruelty, into what a savage  
may a man degenerate!

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It were an easy matter to produce a variety of instances to illustrate the power of habit; and to shew what a tight rein it is necessary to hold over ourselves, if we would avoid the formation and indulgence of bad habits. To this view of the subject, I wish, in the *first* place, to direct your attention.

By an indulgence of the practice, men grow in love with sin. Reason is given us to control the turbulence of passion, to set bounds to the cravings of appetite, to restrain the inclinations of a corrupt heart. Conscience, as the vicergerent of God, often remonstrates in the hour of temptation, but, unhappily, present gratifications have such a powerful influence, that every consideration vanishes before them. It is a tempest, a delirium of joy; and though, for a long time, we know how we shall suffer, yet we cannot resist. Again and again this wretched farce is acted; the intoxicating rapture soon vanishes, and shame and remorse as regularly succeed.

At

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At length the character assumes another form. The feelings are blunted. The heart seems to be made of "sterner stuff." The remonstrances of conscience grow weaker and weaker. Reason has yielded to the encroaching enemy. Nothing is seen by the entangled spirit, but the images of its unholy delights. The eye of the mind is grown dim. The capacity of discerning pure and heavenly objects is become so imperfect, that shadows are mistaken for realities, and semblances of good preferred to the substance. Vice is the greatest of all deceivers, but this does not prevent our being in love with it: on the contrary, it is owing to this that it gains such an absolute ascendancy. At last we call good evil, and evil good. Then our captivity is complete; but, alas! we are less sensible of it than ever. We call ourselves free, but at the very instant, the rattling of our chains proclaims us slaves.

Habit in sin, sinks us a degree lower than this. We are not merely in love with wickedness, but our evil gratifications are become necessary, as it were, to our existence.

tence. Perhaps, the zest of transgression is gone. We feel but little positive pleasure in repeating our excesses, but the pain of abstinence is more than we can endure. We commit evil, because we have been used to it. In such cases, the terrible language of the prophet attaches to us—*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? Then may ye, also, do good, who are accustomed to do evil.*

Miserable, degraded beings! is this the end of all your exalted capacities? Did the hand of God create you pure and upright, and have your own inventions and crimes brought you thus low? Your case is every thing but absolutely hopeless. Every repetition of sin has added a rivet to your mental fetters. If you have not feared, you have sadly hardened your consciences. You have done *despite unto the spirit of grace*. You have stiffened your necks against God. The warnings of his love you have slighted. The overtures of his compassion you have trampled upon and despised. Should he at last say, *My spirit shall strive no longer; Ephraim is*

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*wholly joined to idols, let him alone: can you either wonder or escape.*

I shall endeavour,

*Secondly*, to point out the steps which lead to this pit of perdition; of these I shall enumerate only *three*. The beginnings of temptation are disregarded. False notions of sin are entertained. A presumptuous estimation of our own strength is made.

1. At the beginning of life temptations are despised. This part of the subject, my young readers, particularly belongs to you. At present, I may hope, your hearts are not callous. What worlds, if he had them, would the awakened, hoary transgressor give, to be in your circumstances; but vain is the wish. He cannot tread back his steps. He cannot recal the days which are past. The sensations of untainted innocence are gone for ever.

Would you avoid the agonies which lacerate the soul of the old offender, look well to your present steps. Guard against the very first sollicitations of sin. What-  
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ever it pretends, it is a liar. *The way of transgressors is dreadfully hard.* The path of religion has been held up as gloomy and melancholy, but this is not a fair representation. The path of vice is drawn as smooth, beautiful, and gay, but this also is a false picture. Virtue is not without its difficulties; truth cannot deceive, and, therefore, she does not conceal them. The votaries of goodness are never allured by false colours; but the slaves of sin are deceived in every step of their progress. To guard against early temptations, to refrain from entering the path of transgression, is of unspeakable moment. One temptation complied with, proves a fatal earnest of concurrence with a second; a third occasions a still fainter struggle; and a fourth, perhaps, hardens the young offender almost into insensibility. The progress of sin has been compared to a path down hill, and the comparison admirably illustrates the subject; every step becomes more speedy, and encreases the difficulty of a stop.

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2. False notions of sin have been indulged. What men earnestly wish for

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they easily persuade themselves is true. *It is only a little one*, said Lot, when he looked to Zoar, as the place of safety. *It is only a little one*, says the treacherous heart, when it pants for the gratification which sin offers, and, in spite of the known prohibition, pants for the forbidden fruit. This is an awful mistake. No deliberate sin can be little. Every transgression is an outrage on the Divine authority. Every sin sets at defiance the attributes of the Almighty; it either calls them in question, or dares openly to rebel against them.

3. We falsely estimate our own power of resistance. Though failure after failure proves that this is a "baseless fabric," yet upon this fabric we rest. When the agitations occasioned by an act of sin subside, we flatter ourselves that when the temptation again meets us, we shall be able to stand. In a little time we are put to the proof. The temptation returns. The pain we have endured is forgotten; the danger we shall incur is either not thought of, or we have a confused notion that we are unnecessarily alarmed. We know that this  
very



very sin, when it is perpetrated, fills us with horror, and appears in all its hideous deformity; and yet, in our way to a repetition, we can think lightly of it. Thus we impose upon our better judgment—"God would hardly have given us these feelings, if our souls must be ruined by gratifying them. This once cannot much aggravate my guilt, and I am determined this shall be a farewell indulgence. I am not sure whether there is much criminality in this action, but, however, I do not feel quite easy, and, therefore, this once, and I have done with it." O my fellow christians, have I drawn a picture you have never realised. I should be glad if that were the case, but I cannot flatter you so far as to suppose you have never felt any thing like it. Consider, I conjure you, how matters stand between God and your souls, and let not the heavenly monitors, within and without, address and caution you in vain. Conscience remonstrates, and scripture faithfully paints your danger. Turn not a deaf ear to the divine charmers. Suffer not compliance after compliance, to steal away every parti-

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cle of strength, and leave you, like Samson, when his hair was gone, the defenceless victim of your lusts,—a mere bubble, tost on the waves of infamy and sin.

Well, you say, “I admit you have given me a faithful, and a frightful picture of my danger; but what is to be done? Is there no hope? Are the cords of sin so twisted and twisted about me, that I must despair of breaking them?” My friends, let me fix you to this. Are you, indeed, sensible of your danger? There is no hope of setting a man right, till he is convinced he is wrong. If you feel your captivity, there is hope. Dwell, I beseech you, upon this circumstance. It is a wholesome agony that you are now feeling. The *arrows of God* are piercing your soul. The slavery of sin is felt. In the words of the Apostle you exclaim, *O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Child of conviction! there is no room for despair. Your case is difficult and dangerous, but it is not desperate. The gospel is addressed to convinced, humbled sinners. Its language is, *Come, ye that*  
*are*

*are weary and heavy laden ! Awake to righteousness. There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For this very end Christ was made manifest, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, and liberty to those who were bruised. The end proposed, O ye sinful and backsliding children, is your salvation ; and the means are all within your reach. There is no decree of reprobation passed against any, for the same Lord over all, is merciful unto all that call upon him.*

*My advice to you will fall under four heads.*

1. Be extremely vigilant in guarding against the *first* approaches of temptation. This can never be too frequently repeated. The mind, once tainted, can never recover its original purity. Temptation has then a confederate within, and it must be extremely difficult to preserve the soul from treachery and assault. Consider yourselves as in a hostile land, and let all the senses, those avenues to the heart, be constantly



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and strongly watched over. It is much easier to keep an enemy out, than to overcome him when an entrance has been obtained.

2. Consider the consequences of your conduct. Before you yield to iniquity, take a little time to count the cost. See if the pleasure be worth the price you must give for it. 'Tis a disgrace to reason, to act without a plan—to be the mere creatures of circumstances, and float at random on the ocean of life. *Ponder the path of your feet.* Look often to the final issue of things; and if you are satisfied with the choice you have made, go on. It would be presumption to call you back. If the paltry, momentary gratifications of mere animal appetite are superior to divine joys: if false pleasures are better than true ones: in short, if heaven has no charms, and hell no terrors, I have not a word to say. Having considered the consequences of your choice, ye are, doubtlessly, prepared for the event. I may express my wonder at the arguments which determine you. I may even be astonished at the rashness which

which would brave the vengeance of Almighty God; but I have no power to stop your course. Father of Mercies! this must be thy work, and with all the fervor of affection I pray;—Save such characters from themselves!

3. Consider fairly your own strength. Suffer not self-deception to operate here. KNOW THYSELF. How weighty the import of these two words! How unwilling are we to think this unknown! By our behaviour we seem to suppose ourselves infallible. Neither mistakes in judgment, nor failures in practice, must be imputed to us. But let truth and conscience speak. Where is the man who for a year, a month, a day, has never erred or sinned? Can any of *us* lay our hands upon our hearts and say, *we* are the happy exceptions. Let us be humbled in the presence of reason and of God. Let the melancholy truth inspire us with humility, and fill us with caution. Well did the Apostle shew his knowledge of the human heart, when he said, *Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.* We are never in so much danger as when we are confident

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no danger is near us. *Egypt*, says the prophet, to the king of Judah, *is a reed upon which, if any man lean, it will pierce his hand*: precisely this is mere human confidence. We are warned of our danger, let us beware.

4. Let us constantly and earnestly seek after that Divine help which is promised in the gospel. With this I close my exhortations. I cannot lead you to a safer place than the footstool of God. I cannot leave you in better hands than those of infinite wisdom and goodness. In no part of life are we safe from temptation. Habit is perpetually creeping upon us; but in every part of life the throne of God is accessible. We are never at a distance from him. The universe is his temple, and, wherever we are, an altar of devotion is at hand. Into the sanctuary of our own hearts we can always enter. There we can hold holy communion with our God, and there heavenly aid may be received from him. Prayer is *the sword of the spirit*, and it is a powerful weapon. It will keep off every enemy, it will repel every assault. Fervent, humble



humble prayer, is mighty even with God. It will secure us assistance which words cannot describe. United with holiness, it will *wash the Ethiopian white, and change the spots on the Leopard's skin.*

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We have thus taken a large survey of the nature, and power of habit, and particularly dwelt on the danger of bad habits: blessed be God, there is also a bright side of the subject. Habit is not always, nor necessarily on the side of wickedness. Habits of piety and goodness may be formed, and, by this means, the human character may be preserved from the taint, or rescued from the bondage of iniquity.

The attainment of "habitual devotion" is by no means impossible. This heavenly and happy frame of spirit, refers every thing, in a supreme manner, to God. It does not neglect prudent means, nor overlook the agency of second causes, but it considers every thing as under the ultimate control of Divine Power, wisdom, and goodness. In all situations it traces the hand, and adores the operation of God.

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No circumstance, however unexpected, can long disturb the balance of such a mind. It never loses sight of JEHOVAH. It may vibrate, at times, to the right or to the left, but, like the magnetic needle, it never rests but at the pole. However loud the tempests of humanity may roar, the man of strong habitual devotion cannot be seriously alarmed. The persuasion is rooted, and become a part of his very soul, that the God of his salvation "rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm,"

Habitual watchfulness over the violent and impure passions, will enervate their force, and, in time, almost annihilate their influence. Let the first emotions of anger be resisted. Let care be taken resolutely to banish all circumstances which tend to aggravate an injury. Let a sense of our own failings and demerits be frequently in our minds, and we shall acquire a facility in bridling our rage, which will daily encrease, till we arrive at almost an absolute command over ourselves.

Let us avoid ensnaring company, and  
dangerous

dangerous places. Let us resolutely abstain from thoughts, words, and actions, inconsistent with purity, and the looser passions will wither and almost die within us.

To accomplish this desirable end, let us begin with earnestly imploring the divine assistance. Then let us persuade ourselves that if we please we may obtain the victory over every passion. He who despairs of success is half vanquished before he begins the conflict. Let virtuous and useful pursuits occupy our time. Let the friendly and benevolent affections have full scope. Let us consider nothing which is amiable and good as beyond our reach, and we shall make wonderful attainments. Difficulties will vanish. We shall go on from strength to strength. We shall be furnished with wings in our heavenly course, and soar to heights of virtuous perfection which will perfectly astonish our own minds.

Solomon has given us a beautiful image of habitually progressive goodness, with a brief illustration of which I shall conclude this



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this discourse. *The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* Behold, in the eastern horizon, the first streaks of morning, the clouds, which are hastening away on each side, seem to acquire an additional gloom. The luminous circle rapidly spreads. The last barrier sinks, the glowing orb rises into view, pours a flood of splendour on the world, advances in his sublime career, in a few hours gains his meridian altitude, and blazes with all the magnificence of *perfect day!* There cannot be a grander, there cannot be a juster image. True habitual goodness is always progressive: it may sometimes linger, but it never wholly stops. One eminence in goodness attained, the virtuous spirit pants for another. Nothing is done while any thing remains undone. There are spots in the sun, and there are stains in the best human character; but habit, when rightly directed, is all in favour of virtuous progression. Clouds will obscure the brightest day; and failings, and occasional sins, will tarnish all human excellence,

cellence, but it is not in habitual goodness to make a full stop. Death will arrest, but not limit its career; perfection is its object, and the throne of God is its only boundary.

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## SERMON IX.

## REASONS AGAINST ANXIETY.

MATTHEW VI. 34.

*Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

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**M**UCH has been said in all ages and countries about knowledge, wisdom, and happiness. Mankind are embarked in one general pursuit, and that is, the attainment of ease and comfort. For a state of enjoyment all hearts pant, and all heads and hands are at work. The materials of delight are eagerly sought after. Plans and schemes for the acquisition of this desirable object are every day, and in every quarter



quarter of the globe, framing; and, as far as opportunity and ability permit, carrying into execution. As the possession of wealth or fame, of literature and science, of rank and power, or of mere domestic comfort, appears to lay the broadest foundation for happiness, the pursuits of the human race are varied in every possible direction. Peace of mind is the prime ingredient in human felicity, and this is never to be expected where no views superior to present things are familiar to the bosom. Superior views are to be found only in religion. To religion then, and especially the christian religion, permit me to direct your attention, as the *philosophy of happiness*. This divine science, where it is deeply imbibed, will communicate a tranquillity which the world can neither give nor take away. One of the distinguishing titles of the founder of this heavenly religion was the Prince of Peace; and though this chiefly refers to the reconciliation, which, by him, was made of guilty man to his Creator, yet a close inspection of the gospel will prove that the benevolent design of imparting

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peace

SERM. peace of *every kind*, pervades its whole  
IX. system.

In the verse which immediately precedes the text, our Saviour leads us to this only stable basis of all true serenity: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and the righteousness connected with it, and all these things, namely, the means of present safety and comfort, shall be added unto you. Be not anxious for to-morrow; the same Providence will be at the head of affairs then, which is there to-day; and, sufficient to every day is the unavoidable trouble connected with it. That this is the only foundation upon which human felicity can permanently stand, will appear from the following considerations.*

I. We are wholly ignorant what is before us; and to anticipate evils, is both ungrateful and unwise. The foresight of God is unlimited, but the views of man are extremely circumscribed. We know not what a day may bring forth, nor are we in possession of any means by which the knowledge of future events can be attained.

tained. In the book of Providence it is only a few syllables of even the present page that we can read. But is this a subject for complaint or uneasiness? Far from it. A little thought will convince us that it is just the contrary. Future events fall into three grand classes. They must either be *good*, *bad*, or *indifferent*. In the *first* of these cases, suppose we beheld some great good before us, our present situation would grow irksome and unhappy. There would be great danger lest our impatience to reach the approaching delight, should render us incapable of tasting it when it came. A painful void would be felt at present, and at any rate the anticipation would diminish the expected bliss. If, *secondly*, misery were soon to be our lot, every present comfort would be swallowed up in contemplating the distress which was coming on : and, *thirdly*, as in general, nothing peculiarly striking would be discovered, our foresight would be rather pernicious, for the probability of change is, in almost all cases, a pleasing, rather than a painful expectation; but, upon this sup-



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position, that source of pleasure would be cut off. It follows, therefore, that our ignorance of futurity is a foundation for happiness, and not a reason for discontent.

II. We cannot, by any anxiety, however acute, alter the general established order of things. The sun will shine, and the rain will descend: the seasons will revolve, and day and night succeed each other, not only without our interference, but even in spite of our opposition, if we were foolish enough to attempt any. Our Lord gives a very familiar instance of this sort in the 27th verse of this chapter: *Who of you by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature?* or, as it might have been rendered, *one moment to his age or life.* When, also, in the preceding chapter, he cautions his hearers against swearing, he argues the absurdity of it from a similar consideration, that over the things by which we swear, we have not the smallest power. He concludes his instances thus, *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.*

*black.* Should we pity a man who could make himself seriously uneasy, because he could not arrest the planets in their course; stop the revolution of the earth upon its axis, or cause rain or sun-shine just as he pleased? Certainly not. But, in fact, we are each chargeable with this very absurdity when we complain of the operation of any of those general laws by which the world is governed. When we lose our temper, if the weather does not suit our designs; when we fret, because our persons are not of such a shape or height; or when we distress ourselves, and those about us, by repining at any of those things which are plainly out of our power to alter or controul; a moment's thought will shew the weakness and impiety of such behaviour. If *we* had the ability of making alterations, *others* must have it too, and nothing but *chaos* could be the result of such a conflict of jarring interests and desires. Every thing of this sort has also a mixture of impiety in it, for it is a tacit reflection on the wisdom, if not the goodness of our Creator. That these things, there-

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fore, are not left in our hands, but conducted by the understanding and benevolence of God himself, is another reason for composure and satisfaction. The weakness of man, and the power and intelligence of his Maker, both terminate in the same practical consequences.

III. We ought to be calm and satisfied in the prospect of the future, from the experience we have had of the past. Frequently, it may be, we have been the victims of distrust and apprehension. In the former parts of life, we have supposed it impossible to support such and such trials: to bear up under this, or the other disease of body, distress of mind, or cross situation of affairs. But what is the fact? We have survived, and surmounted them all. When we entered the cloud it was not half so black and dismal as it appeared in its approach. The progress, through unknown and trying events, may be compared to a passage through a thick fog. At a very little distance all is impenetrable; not a single object can be perceived, but as we advance,



advance, there is always a little circle of, comparatively, clear atmosphere about us. Thus, in life, though we know not what a day may bring forth, yet we can generally see for a few hours before us, and many an unexpected relief occurs just at the moment when it is most valuable and important. Perhaps we have often been fed only from day to day, yet we have been fed, and, surely, we ought not to despair! *The Lord's ear is not heavy that he cannot hear, nor is his arm shortened that he cannot save.* It is very possible that this day may have its troubles; they may call for all our fortitude; they may exercise all our faith; but let us not add to their pressure, by anticipating greater evils on the morrow. Be not anxious and miserable about what may never take place. *Impatience possess your souls.* Be fervent and honest in your solicitations of divine aid, and you may confidently hope, that if heavenly wisdom appoints you additional trials, heavenly goodness will help you to bear them. To-day you have been held up, and to-morrow, if it will be really best

SERM. for you to stand, you shall not be per-  
 IX. mitted to sink.

IV. From ourselves let us look abroad in the world, and we shall discern new reasons for composure and satisfaction. We see that the Almighty is unmindful of nothing which he has made. He provides for the fowls of the air; he clothes the grass and the lilies of the field. *Sing praises to God,* says the Psalmist, with grateful exultation, *who giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens when they cry. He maketh the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice. The earth is full of thy riches, and so is the great and wide sea; thy creatures all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather, thou openest thine hand, and they are filled with good, thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing. O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!*

The more closely we examine the frame of nature, and investigate the capacities and situations of the animal tribes, the  
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more we shall discover that the world abounds with contrivances for, and means of happiness. To every element, a particular order of creatures belongs. Their outward form, and their internal structure, are most admirably suited to the sphere in which they are to exist; and the materials, for nourishment and delight, which they are likely to meet with. Beasts, birds, fishes and insects, with all their beautiful and endless variety of colour, shape, size, and taste, are proofs of the truth of this remark. Nature is full of God. Reason and speech are his peculiar and glorious gifts to the children of men, and it is a crime to be habitually gloomy and miserable amidst such a display of benevolence in constant activity. Difficulties are to be met with, but they may be solved. The pertness of scepticism may start objections, but sober investigation can furnish a reply. A querulous temper may utter complaints, but honesty of heart will often confess that they were ill founded. Disorder and vice are undoubtedly in the world, but after all, the *tendency* of the divine plans, in its formation



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formation and government, is, evidently, to good; and evil itself is so overruled as to issue in its own destruction. Pain of body, and remorse of conscience, are directly fitted to generate humility, caution, repentance, and holiness. The sufferings of time are overbalanced by the rewards and joys of immortality. Let not a murmur escape us at any of the divine dispensations. Let us wait with patience, resign with good temper, adore with reverence, submit with humility, and trust with unshaken confidence. For this conduct, we have abundant reason.

V. When we consider that God never parts with the reins of government; and that he certainly does regard with peculiar favour those who fear him. These are two distinct, and broad foundations on which to rest our spirits in the pursuit of happiness. It is not only true that in past ages, the ever blessed God has extended his controuling and supporting sceptre over all the works of his hands, but it is absolutely certain that he will continue to do

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do so for ever. Immutable in his nature and purposes, his proceedings are not irregular and fluctuating, like those of his creatures. He is not a friend to-day, and an enemy to-morrow, when there is nothing in us to create a change. He is not limited in his knowledge as we are, and, therefore, he is liable to no mistakes. He sees the end from the beginning. *He is wise in heart, and wonderful in counsel.* Omnipotence is his awful prerogative, and the boundless universe the theatre of its exercise. He is subject to no weariness, and, therefore, he will never resign his dominion through impotency. He is affected by no caprice, and, therefore, he will never lay down his sceptre in disgust. He is exposed to no ignorance, and, therefore, he will never quit his throne in consequence of disappointed expectations.

This glorious and all-perfect Being, does behold with peculiar favour those who fear him. The veracity of God is pledged for the truth of this assertion; and the experience of his people in all  
ages

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ages has borne testimony to it. *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. The Lord forsaketh not his saints. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, and for ever. The Lord is my shield and my buckler; my fortress, and my high tower.* This is the language in which a firm faith has expressed its sense of Almighty protection, and, though full of figures, is not at all difficult to understand. It is descriptive of entire confidence, and is fully warranted by those declarations in which God, who cannot lie, has pledged himself to be the guardian and defence of the virtuous.

VI. This God we profess to trust in and adore, and it is inconsistent with such a profession, to be anxious and unhappy. Religion forbids not only despair but distrust. Shall the volume of divine truth afford us no hope? Shall the promises of God administer no consolation? What do we



we think constitutes religion? A mere heap of barren speculations? Certain opinions about God and man; about virtue and vice; which are to make no impression on our hearts and lives? Do we suppose that religion is nothing but arguing and wrangling about subjects which even the Bible does not profess to explain: or do we think that *one* day in *seven*, to pass a few hours in a place set apart for public worship, or to express ourselves in affected phrases when talking upon sacred subjects, is the *whole* of piety, and religion? If we do, we are grossly mistaken. All this is perfectly compatible with the indulgence of a multitude of weak and wicked passions. We may be proud and tyrannical: we may be unjust and censorious: we may be impatient, fretful, and unthankful: we may be trifling and licentious. If this is religion, it is impossible to disgrace it: and it is no wonder if, notwithstanding its profession, you are as uneasy and anxious as those who make no pretensions to it.

I trust, however, that I am addressing those whose settled opinion it is, that the doctrines

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doctrines of the gospel are *all* of a directly practical tendency. You are satisfied, that the race of man has not been abandoned by its Maker, thrown upon the common of the world, and left to wander without a clue in the pursuit of happiness. You are persuaded that the Creator of all things takes cognizance of human actions. In the attributes of God you can discern reasons for viewing him as the father and benefactor of men. In the example of Christ you behold a pure, and perfect character held up for your imitation. In all the precepts of the gospel you discover a rule of life; and in all its promises and prospects, a foundation for confidence and hope. Consider, what all this is requiring from you, a contented, cheerful, and manly spirit.

Is existence a blessing? Is God all perfection? Notwithstanding many evils, is there not also much good even in the life which now is; and has not scripture assured us that no human imagination can reach the glory of the life which is to come?

*What manner of persons ought we to be?*

If

If from such principles as these melancholy is produced, where are we to look for rational happiness? Let heathens and atheists be fretful and miserable; they may be so. To them every thing may appear confused and disorderly, but to the believer in *Jesus*, enough is clear to satisfy him that all is tending to a beautiful and glorious order of things. Full of unshaken tranquillity and sublime confidence, he can look into another world, and anticipate that *glory, honour, and immortality*, which are reserved for all such as, by a *patient continuance in well-doing*, are seeking and preparing for it.

To improve this subject,

1. Let us reflect upon the nature of this world. It is evidently a mixed and preparatory, not a perfect and final state. In all the parts of it there is a close analogy. It is often a stormy, and always a transitory abode. Its inhabitants, of every class, partake of the changing nature of the house in which they dwell: the noblest of them all, the human race, are subject to this primary law of mortality. They, as  
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well as inferior animals, are born in a feeble and diminutive state; by every change of the elements they are more or less affected, and to multitudes, in every stage of their progress, these changes prove fatal. At first, like blossoms on a fruit tree, they are very frail, and a proportionable havock is made among them; but there is no age in which we are exempt from the sweeping influence of accident or disease.

It is unreasonable to expect that in such a world, *we* should experience no trouble. Men are all made of the same materials, and, without a miracle, must, as they are placed in the same world, be affected in nearly a similar manner. There are few, indeed, that can plead for an exemption from the common lot, from a superior excellence of character. To repine, then, at being circumstanced as millions are beside, and at suffering inconveniencies to which our own imprudencies often expose us, is irrational and pusillanimous: to go further, and arraign the divine appointments by which things are made as they are, is both absurd and impious.

pious. The world and its inhabitants are equally the workmanship of God, and notwithstanding all the evils, real or imaginary, which are to be found in it, few indeed, are the instances in which the children of men do not rejoice in existence.

But after all, affliction and sorrow are not empty names, and to some individuals a large portion is given. In such cases, reason is a cold comforter, and to be told that others are exposed to equal or greater calamities, is a poor solace to an aching heart.—Here then it is evident,

2. That religion only can make us contented. The experience of multitudes is upon record, that the pleasures of sense, and even of intellect, however multiplied and varied, are insufficient to secure happiness. Amongst the countless myriads of those who have tried every resource of this kind, not one has been able to succeed. All have felt wants which earth could not supply, and the language of Solomon has been the language of every human heart

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without religion, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!*

It is but a few to whose lot a multitude of pleasures fall. Man is vulnerable on all sides. Like a pilgrim in a wilderness, he is liable to a thousand wounds. A host of enemies hang upon almost every step. Thorns and briars lacerate his feet, and if there were *no balm in Gilead*, he would sooner perish than he now does. Thanks be to God, in the temple of religion exhaustless stores are deposited! The heavenly physician is there to apply the balm with his own hands. Jesus, the Son of God, is saying, "Your Father who is in heaven, knoweth all your wants. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and you shall find rest to your souls.*"

That religion is able to impart consolation, even under the sharpest sufferings, we have *clouds of witnesses* to prove. That alone which can make an expectant of immortality miserable, is a consciousness of not being, upon the whole, a sincere and upright character; but this consciousness



ness no really religious man can have. Into whatever mistakes his fellow creatures may fall in appreciating his character, and however severely they may treat him, in consequence of those mistakes, his own heart acquits him, and, therefore, he has confidence in the sight of God. He knows the very utmost that prejudice and injustice can effect. For awhile they may tarnish his good name; they may deprive him of his property, and his freedom; they may deeply stab him in the persons of his children and friends; they may torture and put him to death, but they cannot give him an uneasy conscience. Not a wall of adamant is such a refuge as the broad shield of conscious integrity. The frail body may be pierced and die, but, by the mortal stroke, the triumphant spirit will only be liberated and unshackled for ever. This leads me to a

3. And concluding remark, that with the prospect of heaven before us, we are inexcusable if we are discontented. What are all the evils of this fleeting little span of existence, compared with a felicity of

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which when reason, imagination, and Scripture have assembled all their images of delight, we know nothing with precision? It is not pretended that pain and suffering are no evils; nor do I mean to insinuate that it is unbecoming the religious character, that we should feel them as such. What I wish is, to attain and infuse something of that heroic spirit which, under the influence of faith, enabled the Apostle to say, *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory.* Animated with this true view of things, while we live, let *us live unto the Lord.* Fully persuaded of the serious and consolatory truths we have been now contemplating, may we feel no anxiety for the morrow, but leave ourselves cheerfully in the hands of infinite wisdom and love! And now to him, the adorable JEHOVAH, *of whom, and to whom, and through whom, are all things, be glory and honour for ever and ever.* Amen.

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## SERMON X.

THE NECESSITY OF PATIENCE UNDER  
SMALL DIFFICULTIES, AS A PREPA-  
RATION FOR GREATER TRIALS.

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JEREMIAH XII. 5.

*If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?*

THESE words which, as a detached sentence, are obscure, will appear both plain and beautiful, if we look back to the close of the preceding chapter. Jeremiah had recently discovered that his countrymen of *Anathoth* had been plotting against his life; and though he had re-

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ceived a direct promise of the divine protection, his mind appears peculiarly affected by the circumstance. His faith was staggered, and the fear of man had gained an undue ascendancy. Of this, the earnestness and strength of his expostulation with God is a sufficient proof. "*Righteous art thou, O Lord—yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy who deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root. They grow, yea, they bring forth fruit. Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins. Notwithstanding thy perfections and attributes, it frequently appears as if thou wert the friend, and not the enemy of the wicked. They have so much prosperity and success, that it is a hard trial for the faith of thy servants.*"

We find this was often a stumbling block to pious characters; Job, Asaph, David, Habakkuk, and many others, were *envious at the foolish*, and confounded when they saw the prosperity of the wicked. Jeremiah thus goes on with his remonstrance. *But thou,*

*thou, O Lord! knowest me, thou hast seen me, and tried my heart towards thee.* "Why then," it is as if he had said, "seeing I am thus faithful and obedient, are these fears and dangers suffered to come upon me?"

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The querelous temper of the Prophet was, certainly, very reprehensible. He entered upon his office, under this express promise, *Behold! I have made thee, this day, a defended city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land: against the kings of Judah, against the princes, the priests, and the people, of the land; they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail, for I am with thee saith the Lord, to deliver thee.* Upon the present occasion his complaints were particularly ill-founded, for he had just been ordered to denounce the anger of heaven against the people of Anathoth; and therefore, probably, it was, that instead of consolation, greater difficulties were pointed out. God is worthy of entire confidence, but the language of the prophet was plainly inconsistent with this; and the wisdom of the Almighty did not see fit to explain or vin-

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dicare his proceedings. *If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses? Remember, Jeremiah! thy character and office; if the small difficulties thou hast hitherto met with in the discharge of it, make so deep an impression on thy mind, what wilt thou do in those greater trials which are yet to come?*

The simile here used of the footmen and horses, is easy to be understood. To equal the speed, or contend against the force of a person on foot, is clearly a much easier matter than to do either when our antagonist is on horseback. But what is it which makes the *swelling of Jordan* a suitable comparison, and of nearly the same import. Historians and travellers inform us, agreeably to what we read in the book of Joshua, that at certain seasons of the year, particularly in the time of harvest, the Jordan overflows its banks. Upon such occasions, lions and other wild beasts come down, in great numbers to it. This circumstance must greatly increase the calamity of the inundation, and add to the alarm



alarm and danger of the inhabitants. From hence it follows that *the swelling of Jordan* would be a very proper, as well as intelligible figure, for a trying and dangerous situation.

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Having thus explained the text, I shall endeavour to vindicate the procedure of Providence to which it alludes, and shew that, in the present state, trials of our faith and patience are as necessary as trials of any other kind. If the previous question is put, Why is such a state as ours necessary at all? It must be resolved into the appointment of infinite wisdom and goodness. If this does not satisfy, I know of no other solution of the difficulty. When the fountain of truth is forsaken, the shallow rivulet of mere conjecture will not quench our thirst.

I. It is taken for granted that the present life is only a state of preparation for some future existence. *Life and immortality have been brought to light by Jesus Christ.* I shall not here stay to prove a truth, which is expressly asserted in Revelation.

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lation. Upon this basis, all the exhortations and threatenings, the directions and promises of Scripture rest. The present world, it is admitted, is not a place in which the Divine government is completely unfolded. Here, *all things come alike to all*. There is no striking difference made in the affairs of men. Supposing them to pay an equal attention to the common concerns of life, men of religion, and those who are destitute of it, succeed equally well in the world. But then it does not follow, because a man is destitute of piety, he is, therefore, destitute of every amiable and useful quality. This thought, though a very obvious one, is frequently overlooked, and serious professors, not making all the allowances they should, find their difficulty in accounting for the success of irreligious characters, greatly increased. Besides this, the wisest of men informs us, that here *there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to*

*to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.*

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The mutability of human affairs is so great, that often the best concerted plans are overthrown, and those schemes which bid the fairest for success, are brought to nothing. Every thing seems to us to be left to the dominion of chance, and it is no wonder that, limited as our faculties and duration are, this should be the case. It is but little we can discover, even of the affairs which are passing immediately within our notice: much more must we be perplexed, when we attempt to decide upon a chain of causes and effects, two or three links of which are all that we can discern. *One generation passeth away, and another cometh.* This we know, and, perhaps, it is almost the whole extent of our knowledge. It surely, then, becomes us to be modest in our decisions upon the divine government; and to be satisfied that this world cannot be the whole of man. We see that trouble abounds, and we ought not to be surprised, or greatly dismayed, when we have our share of the  
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common lot. No reason can be assigned why we should be exempted from the usual vicissitude of human affairs. All this affords us arguments for cheerfulness, activity and resignation. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.* In short, we are frail imperfect beings, and ours is the lot of mortal, short-sighted creatures. Therefore, I observe,

II. It is our wisdom to keep this in our minds, and, as much as possible, to prepare for change and disappointment. We should strive to acquire the most honourable notions of God and his providence. Reason and revelation both proclaim him, *the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth: keeping mercy for thousands of generations; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.*

JEHOVAH is not an arbitrary monarch, who governs the universe, like a despot, by unknown changeable laws. He is not  
a capricious

a capricious ruler, who selects his favourites from mere whim, without any regard to their moral qualities. He is not an hard master, requiring what he has not given abilities to perform. He does not expect to reap where he has not sown: to gather where he has afforded no opportunity or means of collecting a treasure. There is a passage, upon this subject, in one of the parables, which has been often misunderstood. I mean the parable of the talents, in the twenty-fifth chapter of *Matthew*, where, under the similitude of a master reckoning with his servants, the future account of mankind is represented. The slothful servant is supposed to say, *Lord! I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.* The master replies, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, upon thine own principles thou art condemned. Admitting that I were that unreasonable and hard character, which thou hast conceived me to be, there was the strongest reason for exerting thy utmost diligence; but this miserable subterfuge

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fuge cannot serve thy turn ; the manner in which thou hast apologised for thy behaviour, is an additional crime. To excuse thyself, thou hast misrepresented the character of thy Lord." This, if I am not greatly mistaken, is the true meaning of this celebrated passage ; and if it is, nothing can be further from countenancing the doctrine of the mere sovereignty of God, which has been such a favourite topic with many serious and good men.

That this life is only the beginning of our existence, and that its great purpose is to prepare us for a nobler state of being, are truths which we should practically acknowledge. If we do this, it will follow that the situation in which we are placed is a matter of little importance. The great point will be, that we discharge the duties of it well. Whether we possess *five, two, or only one talent*, is immaterial, as only a proportionate improvement will be expected. In all states, however, we shall be exposed to temptations, and no degree of circumspection will always keep us from the snares incident to that station of life



life in which we are placed. Frequent self-examination is a sacred duty. To be properly diffident of our own strength, is true wisdom. To live as in the sight of God, is our only safe course; and to trust in him, when trouble and disappointment overtake us, is our noblest privilege. God can best judge what will be, upon the whole, best for us; and if we do not forsake him, he will not abandon us. *Trust in him at all times, ye people, and pour out your hearts before him.*

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III. If we do not accustom ourselves to this honourable and truly religious behaviour, we shall lose the ability of bearing, with decency and composure, future trials. Every thing with which we are acquainted, both in nature and morals, is in a state of progression. There are, it is admitted, some cases in which calamity follows calamity with gigantic strides. More than common fortitude and support, are necessary to prevent the victims of such dispensations from sinking in despair: but from extreme cases general rules are not to be drawn.

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drawn. We may safely leave to a wise and good God, the vindication of his own perfections, and the care of suffering virtue. Our business is now with the common course of human affairs. In general, there is no doubt but our trials bear a proportion to our means of resistance and consolation. That we are not always sensible of this, does not proceed from its not being really the case, but from our general inattention and unfaithfulness to our religious advantages. Habits are easily formed, and he must have made a very limited observation, either of himself or others, who is not aware of their power. If, therefore, in the earlier stages of life, a little opposition stops our progress; if the loss of a few comforts alienates the heart from God and goodness; envelopes the life in gloom, and begets in the mind a distrust of the Divine mercy; how, when heavier trials succeed, shall we escape the bitterness of despair? If, in the *land of peace*, surrounded with comfort, we are often dismayed, what shall we do when an ocean of trouble breaks in upon us?

IV. It

IV. It is our *duty* and *wisdom* thus to discipline our minds, because we know not what a day may bring forth. However prosperous our present condition may be, absolute security is not the lot of man. History, sacred and profane, is full of examples of the mutability of human circumstances. In public and private life, the instability of the world is almost equally felt. When Jeremiah was so alarmed at the conspiracy of the men of *Anathoth*, he had not experienced the prison of the king of Judah, nor the horrors of *Malchiah's* dungeon. In the former part of his days, his country was the *land of peace* to him, but in the reign of *Zedekiah*, it was *the swelling of Jordan*. Instructive examples of the trying changes of human life meet us in every direction. In all probability *we* have not been exempt, and this is certain, that none can tell, what, in the progress of his days, shall happen to him. Immutability is the portion of God only. *Man, at his best state, is vanity. Who knoweth, saith the son of David, what is good for a man in this life, all the days of his*



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 X. *for who can tell a man what shall be after*  
*him under the sun ?* This is true, but it is  
 language tinctured with peevishness and  
 disgust. Such complaints are unworthy  
 men of reason and religion : they are dis-  
 honourable to God and his providence,  
 and will seldom or never escape from men  
 of true piety. This leads me to remark,

V. That we cannot sink under any of  
 our trials and discouragements, if religion  
 has its natural influence on our hearts. To  
 be patient under disappointments is a  
 proof of a noble mind. To be resigned,  
 and, even cheerful, when bereaved of many  
 comforts, is a tribute we owe to the good-  
 ness of almighty God, and to the consoling  
 nature of religion. *Man shall not live by*  
*bread alone, but by every word that pro-*  
*ceedeth out of the mouth of God.* It is not  
 the mere supplies of mortality, the food  
 and raiment of the passing day, to which a  
 man is chiefly to look for his sustenance  
 and comfort : these may, in a great mea-  
 sure fail ; but, as a religious character, he  
 has

has the promises of God to support him. Such a man does not do justice to the sufficiency of divine grace, unless he can say with the Prophet—*Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; though the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; though the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

Christianity, my brethren, is in a peculiar manner the religion of the poor and distressed. It gives to its dejected, but faithful votaries, *beauty for ashes; the oil of joy for mourning; and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.* It addresses its consolations to such as are *weary and heavy laden.* It promises them, not, perhaps, the removal of their temporal calamities, but the forgiveness of their sins, the approbation of God, and, as the consequence of their present afflictions, if sustained well, *an eternal weight of glory.* In the noblest of all senses, the religion of the Son of God is what he announced

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*it, Comfort to the poor; healing for the broken in heart; deliverance to the captives; recovering of sight to the blind; and liberty to those who are bruised with their mental chains.*

Possessing a religion with these great and precious promises, it becomes us to rise superior to the common trials of man; yea, it should induce us to go further than this, to glory in distress, that so the supporting grace of God may be illustrated and magnified. *Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. In the world, says our blessed Lord, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* The purifying nature of trouble has often been manifest. The noblest characters have been formed in the school of adversity. There is something in constant ease and success which effeminates and unbraces the soul. Pleasure, like the sun in the fable, melts down our strength, ungirds our loins, and stops our exertion; but affliction and disappointment detach us from the world, make us buckle on our harness,



harness, and resolutely proceed on our journey. A higher encomium on the benefits of adversity cannot be pronounced than when we are told, that Christ himself was *made perfect through sufferings*. When the apostle, in the island of Patmos, had, in a vision, a glimpse of the heavenly world, among the most illustrious of its inhabitants, he distinguished those who came thither out of *great tribulation*. Let us, remembering these things, accept *the chastening of the Lord*, and see to it, that *we are not weary and faint in our minds*.

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We owe this preparation for trials, and this patient submission to them, to the perfections of our heavenly Father. With respect to the troubles in which our own folly or criminality involves us, we have no right to complain: and as to all others, they are the appointments of infinite wisdom and love. The end proposed is the destruction of sin, and the training us up to a meetness for everlasting life. Divine Wisdom will chuse the best means to accomplish this end. Viewing our disappointments and trials in this light, we shall

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consider not only the rod, but him who appoints it; and be enabled to look beyond our present sufferings to the glorious ends which they will answer.

As the wisdom of God will direct him to chuse the *best*, so his goodness will dispose him to adopt the *easiest* means of accomplishing the final welfare of his people. Our providential afflictions are, certainly, no more than a necessary burden. If the purification of our minds could be secured without them, they would not be laid upon us. The love of the Almighty to his creatures, is a truly divine affection. It is not a fond and blind partiality. It is the tenderness of a parent, enlightened and guided by the consummate wisdom of a God: and, consequently, it leads to the adoption of those measures, whatever they are, which will best secure its glorious purposes.

To sum up the whole: the glorious prospects of a future world, which the Gospel unveils, may well support us in the darkest scene. What is that earthly distress which the hope of eternal life cannot soothe?

Why

Why art thou cast down, O troubled Christian, and why is thy spirit disquieted within thee?—HOPE thou in God! The cup which thy heavenly Father hath given thee, it is thy duty to drink. The bitterness of distress will sweeten thy deliverance. The darkness of the grave will only brighten the country which is beyond it. TRUST thou in God, and the horsemen shall not weary thee: LOOK unto Jesus, and in the swelling of the Jordan of death, thou shalt not be lost,

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## SERMON XI.

ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

ROMANS IX. 21.

*Hath not the potter power over the clay; of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another to dishonour?*

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THE holy scriptures were given by the inspiration of the Almighty, and their grand aim is to lay before us the principles and motives of a good and holy life. Admitting this, and also the several attributes of the ever blessed God, we may be sure that no passage in this divine volume, however it may strike us upon a first perusal, can be inconsistent with the grand object of the whole. With this principle in our minds, let us take up the sentiment delivered in the text, and I hope to make it

it evident, that from these words of the Apostle, duly considered, we may derive lessons *profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness.*

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I propose, *First*, to explain the context, and state the Apostle's argument. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to point out in what respects a parallel may be traced between this example of the potter's power over the clay, and certain dispensations of Providence towards mankind. *Thirdly*, I shall show in what instances the parallel fails when applied to us; and, *Fourthly*, I shall conclude with some practical inferences. I am

I. To explain the context, and state the Apostle's argument. The great point which, in this epistle, the Apostle endeavours to prove, both to Jews and Gentiles, is this—The necessity of their believing in Christ, and the danger of their neglecting the offers of grace and mercy by him. *The whole world, he proves, was become guilty before God, and consequently if men were*  
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to be justified, or received into favour at all, it must be freely, by divine grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Against such a declaration as this, the Apostle foresaw many objections would be raised; and these objections, he spends a great part of the epistle in obviating and answering. As the case of his countrymen, the Jews, was peculiar, he is in an especial manner solicitous to remove the difficulties by which they were affected.

The doctrine of the gospel appeared to the Jews, not only novel and strange, but likewise inconsistent with the Abrahamic Covenant, and totally subversive of their national privileges. They had long been accustomed to think themselves the sole favourites of heaven, the peculiar and elected people of God, and to suppose that they should always continue thus honoured and distinguished from the mass of mankind. Now the just and equalizing system of *Jesus* openly opposed these fond and arrogant pretensions, and expressly took away every distinction between Jew and Gentile. Nay, more than this, the  
Jews



Jews were plainly told, that if they continued obstinate in their unbelief, they should be rejected and cut off, and that, through their fall, salvation should the sooner be brought to the Gentiles.

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After strongly expressing his affection for his unhappy countrymen, who had by their sins forfeited the divine favour, the Apostle goes on to observe, that there was no room to complain of the Almighty for chusing the Gentiles, and rejecting them in the present case, since their adoption at first was a matter of pure favour. They were the descendants of Jacob, the younger brother, and their being chosen as the people and church of God, in preference to the family of Esau the elder, was a departure from those prejudices in favour of primogeniture which very early obtained among mankind. If it had pleased the Divine Being, at the outset of the business, the cases might have been reversed; the Jews might have been passed by, and the Gentiles adopted as the peculiar people of God; and in that case (it is as if the Apostle had said "What could you have objected?")

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jected?) *Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? "These national privileges, for of such, and such only I am here speaking, are matters of mere favour and bounty, and can be determined by nothing but the absolute pleasure and appointment of God; just as it depends upon the will of the potter, what portion of his materials shall be employed in the construction of a superior, or inferior vessel."*

"But in the present case, we are not obliged to rest the matter wholly here, for I must add, that dear as you are to me, as my countrymen, and descendants from the same eminent and venerable characters, I cannot avoid seeing how criminal you are become in the sight of an holy God. The Almighty sustains a two-fold character, and is to be considered not only as a potter, who might, at first, have made you vessels to dishonour, *i. e.* have denied you the national honours he originally granted; but,

but, as a righteous judge, to inflict upon you those punishments which you have long deserved, but which, from compassion, have been hitherto withheld. That you should be rejected and disowned, after such an abuse of the divine favours, is surely but just; nor can it be any impeachment of the divine rectitude, that the Gentiles in their turn should be dealt with as favourably as you have been. The same God is the creator and father of ALL."

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This, I think, is a fair statement of the Apostle's argument, which was what I proposed to give under the *first* head. I am

II. To point out in what instances a parallel may be traced between this example, and certain dispensations of Providence towards mankind. And,

*First*, the manner of God's dispensing temporal blessings to the several nations of the earth, as, we see, he has done, may be well illustrated by this comparison of the potter and the clay. The Supreme Governor of the World disposes of its provinces



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vinces with a sovereign hand. In this respect he loved *Jacob* and hated *Esau*; *i. e.* he favoured and advanced the posterity of Jacob, and, comparatively speaking, slighted and disregarded the descendants of *Esau*. The fruitful land of Canaan was the allotment of the one, while the portion of the other was a *howling wilderness*. The posterity of Jacob were more numerous and powerful than that of *Esau*, and in this sense, but in no other, did the *elder serve the younger*. If we look round the world, we shall find that all nations and countries are *Jacobs* or *Esaus* in this respect. Some have a luxuriant soil, and are distinguished by an air peculiarly balmy and salubrious; others are cold and barren, subject to frequent vicissitudes, and, comparatively, unfriendly to the sustenance, and comfort of their inhabitants. Vast is the difference between the political circumstances of the several nations of the globe. Experience, indeed, proves that the balance of good and evil, of advantages and disadvantages, is more nicely adjusted than, upon a cursory view, we should suppose;

suppose; yet it is an indisputable fact, that nations and countries are very differently circumstanced. Some have a much larger share of the supplies and conveniences of life than others.

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But it is not merely in the case of whole nations that these differences are observable, the situation of individuals in the same community, is no less various. Some are raised high in the scale of prosperity, and distinguished by the possession of the goods both of body and fortune. Others are appointed to act their part, and pass all their days, in the back ground of society; broken spirits, and infirm constitutions, are often their lot; and, sometimes deformity of body is the companion of poverty of condition. Some, again, have neither poverty nor riches, but are placed in that middle station, which wisdom and piety would choose as the most favourable to virtue and happiness. Now, with respect to these things, who can dispute the potter's right, or what injustice is done to any part of the clay, by the various uses to which it may be applied. If God did not intend

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intend to make *all* vessels alike, then, by the very condition of the case, the diversity complained of is unavoidable. This being so, which vessel should be formed for a superior, and which for an inferior use, must depend *solely* on the will of the Great Disposer of all things.

*Secondly*, The parallel still holds good, and the same argument is conclusive, with respect to the several dispensations of divine grace, and to the degrees of spiritual light and knowledge which have been afforded to different ages, and countries. We cannot fathom, and it certainly becomes us not to arraign the wisdom of Providence in these particulars; but this we know, that the Mosaic dispensation, though of divine origin, was never designed to be universal; and that though the gospel is fitted, by its nature, to extend to all countries, yet, in fact, the knowledge of it is still very limited. The same observation applies to natural religion; some nations, as well as particular persons, have had greater advantages for knowing and practising it than others. To objections founded upon



upon such things, what answer shall we return? I know of none but that which the gospel supplies; that where *much is given, much is also, required*: and that the Governor of the Universe will regulate his demands, hereafter, by what a man hath, and not by what he neither had nor could obtain. It follows, that no argument can be drawn from these, apparently, unequal dispensations, to impeach the divine justice, which expects to reap only in proportion to the seed sown. If, not satisfied with this general solution, a querulous curiosity will push the enquiry, and demand why all nations were not made equally acquainted with the divine will? Why higher degrees of information, and nobler views and motives are granted to some than to others? The proper answer to all such enquiries seems to be the question in the text, *Hath not the potter power over the clay?* There are doubtless a multitude of wise reasons in the Divine Mind for constituting things as they are. Perhaps many of these will, hereafter, be made known to us, and fill us with wonder

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and

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and praise. In the meantime, it will be our wisdom to rest satisfied with this consideration; the Supreme Jehovah, the Fountain of Power, Intelligence, and Goodness, has ordered things thus, and, therefore, upon the whole, all must be right. If the murmur of objection is still heard, this is the proper remonstrance; *Who art thou, O man! who repliest against God; shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?*

As ages and countries are favoured, in a greater or less degree, with the means of grace, and the knowledge of divine things, so are individuals of the same age and country. Remarkable is the difference between the temper, genius, passions, and general constitution of men; and as great a variety exists in their outward condition and circumstances. Some seem abandoned from their cradle to almost every disadvantage: while others are blessed with an excellent education, an exemplary acquaintance, and almost every means of arriving at truth and virtue. Let it never be forgotten, in such views of things as these, that let talents

lents be few or many, we shall be accountable only for what we have received. He who had but *one* talent imparted to him, will not be condemned because he did not receive *five*; but he will be condemned, and his condemnation will be just, if he neglected to employ that *one* in as useful a manner as was in his power. I come,

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III. To shew in what instances the parallel in the text fails, when applied to us. And,

*First.* This simile of the potter's power over the clay, cannot countenance the notion that the Almighty formed any of his creatures with the intent that they should be finally miserable. The design of the Apostle was only to shew, that he might disperse his favours in what portions he thought fit, without the charge of injustice. If a set of beings are called into existence, and furnished with means and capacities sufficient to procure them so much happiness as shall overbalance the misery to which their state may be subject, they have reason to be thankful for this communi-



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cation of good : they have, certainly, no just ground for complaint, though other beings should have nobler capacities, and larger portions of good imparted to them. This, I apprehend, is all that the Apostle intended, and it appears to me, that the metaphor with which he has illustrated his argument, will prove nothing beyond this : for observe, though the potter exercises an absolute power over the clay, so as to make of the same lump some vessels to honour and others to dishonour ; *i. e.* some to more noble, and others to inferior uses, yet he never makes a vessel with an intent either to break it in pieces, or throw it away. Why should we suppose our Maker to be inferior in wisdom or kindness to one of our fellow men ? The context speaks no such language, nor, I am persuaded, is the idea to be found in a single passage of Scripture, rightly understood. The word of God cannot contradict itself, and that word contains such language as this : *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live :*  
turn

*turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? why will ye die, O sons of Adam? Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* It is this God of whom the New Testament declares, that He *will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.* How can these expressions possibly be reconciled with the opinion, that it is, and was, from all eternity, the intention of the Great Creator, that some of his creatures should be finally miserable; and that for this very purpose they were brought into being?

*Secondly.* The text will not support the notion, that a just and benevolent Lord and Governor, expects more from his creatures than he has given them ability to perform. The similitude the Apostle adopts is evidently as distant from this meaning as possible. If the potter makes

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any vessel to *dishonour*, or intends that *this* particular lump of clay should be fitted and applied to a more servile use than *that*, it is evident, by the very circumstances of the case, that he expects no other service from it than that to which he hath appointed it. Thus acts the Sovereign Creator with respect to the beings he has formed, and the gifts which he has bestowed.

*Thirdly.* This similitude of the potter and the clay, which is so happy an illustration of the power of the Almighty in the creation and disposition of all things in the *natural* world, is by no means suitable, as an explanation of the rules of the divine government in his *moral* dominion. It is admitted that, before creation, we are as mere clay in the hands of the potter. In what part of the world we shall be born, and in what rank of life we shall be placed, must depend upon the absolute will of the Creator. We then belong, entirely, to the *natural* government of God, to that part of the divine administration in which  
*sovereign*



*sovereign power* is eminently displayed in rich variety of gifts and graces. But after the donation is made, and life put into our hands to cultivate and improve, we are no longer as mere clay in the hands of the potter; we become *moral* agents, and belong to the *moral* dominion of the Deity, to that department of the divine administration over which justice and mercy particularly preside.

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This idea of a division of the divine government into natural and moral departments, is founded on the nature of things, and it is impossible that the same comparison can properly illustrate the scheme of government in both these departments, because their laws are different, and are regulated by the things they govern. In the *natural* world the Supreme Potentate acts irresistibly, and secures unlimited obedience, by the impulse of mechanical and necessary laws: But in the *moral* world he acts by motives of reason and persuasion. He controls none by force or necessity, but treats them as free and moral agents, who are hereafter to give an account of their

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actions. By this means, whatever inequalities there are in creation, and in bestowing a variety of talents according to the will of the donor, there will be none in the final distribution of rewards and punishments. Then every one will be dealt with according to his works, and whosoever *feareth God, and worketh righteousness, will be accepted of him.*

Having thus endeavoured to shew in what instances the parallel in the text fails when applied to us, I pass on,

IV. To an improvement of the whole; this I shall attempt in *three* practical reflections.

1. From a review of the explanation given of the text, under the first head of this discourse, we may observe how wrong it is to take up with the sound of a scripture expression, without consulting the scope and design of the writer when he uses it. It is a gross mistake to think that a principle or doctrine is true, merely because it seems to be countenanced by a detached scripture phrase. If the passage in question

question is misapplied, it is not scripture in sense, though it be scripture in words. There is reason for the utmost caution in this matter, both on account of the importance of the subject, and the real difficulty with which it is frequently attended. The language in which the scriptures are written, especially the Hebrew, is very ancient; it abounds with figures peculiarly bold, with expressions frequently hyperbolical, and with references to customs and manners which bear little affinity to any thing of which we are witnesses. These are causes of obscurity for which due allowance must be made, and it is only by sober criticism that we can hope, in a variety of instances, to develope the truth.

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For example, when two sentences are in apparent opposition, they frequently only imply, that one is to have the preference. When it is said, *I desired mercy and not sacrifice*, the meaning is, I desired mercy rather than sacrifice. When it is said, *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated*, nothing more is intended than that God loved *Jacob* more than *Esau*; nor have the words



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words, in any sense of them, the smallest reference to the eternal state of either *Jacob* or *Esau*. They merely signify that the descendants of Jacob should be favoured with some distinguishing privileges, both spiritual and temporal, above the descendants of Esau. That the word *hate*, in scripture language, often signifies only a *less* degree of affection, may be easily proved. I shall only produce one passage, Our Lord says, *No man can be my disciple, unless he hateth his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life also*. This declaration he thus explains himself, in another place, *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me*.

In these, and all such cases, the best general rules which I am acquainted with, are the following.

Let the drift and nature of the argument, in which the difficult passage occurs, be more attended to than the bare words; and where a few single passages seemingly contradict the general design, let these be reconsidered, in connection with the rest.

Do

Do not scrupulously attend to the *divisions* which appear in our sacred books. They are merely human; in the New Testament, particularly, modern; frequently injudicious: and sometimes so arbitrary as greatly to perplex, if not absolutely alter, the sense of the passages in which they are made.

Let us endeavour to place ourselves in the situation of those who heard the speaker, or writer himself, and let us try to find out what was the meaning of the words, *at the time* they were uttered, not what they may, perhaps, imply *now*, in times and circumstances so different and distant.

In all cases of difficulty, let the *plain* texts be the interpreters of the *obscure*, and not the obscure of the plain.

Upon the honest use of such maxims as these, let us seriously beg the divine blessing, and there is no reason to fear that we shall fall into any fatal mistakes.

2. From a view of what has been advanced under the *second* general head, we may infer, that if the Almighty is the Sovereign Disposer

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Disposer of the several ranks and conditions of life, we ought to be resigned and contented in our situation, whatever it may be. We are not to chuse for ourselves what parts we shall act on the stage of life, but to act those parts well which are assigned us. It is a great misfortune to many people, that instead of doing their own business, they lose their time, and perplex their minds with idle dreams of what they would do, or say, in situations where it is not probable they will ever appear. It ought never to be forgotten, that this is a state of trial. When our behaviour is examined at the judgment-seat of *Christ*, it will be a poor excuse for our defects to say, that we were so taken up with reveries how we should conduct ourselves in *another* station, that we were unable to attend to the duties of that in which we were placed.

It is, also, a fair inference from the same premises, that if God has greatly diversified the spiritual as well as temporal condition of mankind, it is the duty of each individual to do the utmost he can for the improvement of his own talent with contentment



tentment and gratitude. What is it to us if some have fewer difficulties, or larger portions of grace and understanding than ourselves or others? None will be answerable but in proportion to what they have *received*. It is, likewise, to be remembered, that if we actually do what is in our power, a good God will not be wanting to aid and support us. If little is committed to our trust, our crime will consist, not in having little, but in neglecting the little we had: and the punishment will be inflicted upon us, not because we did not perform more than our strength permitted, but because we performed less, and fell short of what we might have done. As a

3. And last inference, I observe, that if we are not unfaithful to ourselves we shall be safe, for a good God hath put no bar in our way to heaven and happiness. The Great Author and Finisher of our faith is continually calling us, in the gracious dispensation of the gospel, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. From hence it clearly follows, that all excuses and pretences, all supposed difficulties

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ties and obstructions, are frivolous and vain. If *there is a lion in the way*, it is of our own placing. If we are bound with the chain of our sins, it must be by our own fault; and if this *should* be the case, we are still to remember, that we may break these bonds asunder with the aid of that divine grace which is ever ready to strengthen those who sincerely and earnestly desire it. To sum up the whole, let us not make ourselves *vessels to dishonour*; let us not be the authors of our own destruction; but as we are *called* to faith and repentance, by JESUS CHRIST, and *elected*, in the gospel, to holiness and newness of life, let us *give all diligence to make this our calling and election sure.* Amen.

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## SERMON XII.

*THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.*

MATTHEW XIII. 45, 46.

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

**P**ARABLES have always been a favourite mode of instruction in the eastern world. The parables of Scripture are peculiarly apposite and beautiful. Their figures are bold, but not extravagant, and, in general, their meaning, with a little attention, is extremely plain. In a majority of parables, many circumstances are merely ornamental, and therefore are to be disregarded

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regarded in interpretation. A want of attention to this particular, has rendered many of the explications of these divine apologues both absurd and false. To explain these mere embellishments, the most puerile conceits have been adopted, and the spirit of the leading similitude not only weakened, but, sometimes, totally lost.

Our Lord expressly tells us, that his meaning in this, and many other of his parables, was to fix upon the mind a sense of the nature and value of the gospel dispensation. Here it is exhibited under the figure of a pearl, a precious stone, of uncommon worth and beauty. The general idea of this similitude is extremely obvious.—That the gospel of Christ, here denominated the kingdom or reign of heaven, is a most valuable treasure: and that he who is possessed of it, may fairly be esteemed a rich and happy being.

This, and some of the other parables in this chapter, seem to have been delivered to the disciples only. It is certain they were well fitted to support them under the trials and sufferings to which they were shortly

shortly to be exposed. It is as if our divine Master had said, "Be not cast down at the alarming prospect before you. However poor you may be, as to the treasures of earth, of this be assured, that immortal riches belong to you. You are to promulgate my gospel among men, and you cannot have a nobler and happier employment. You are placed in the situation of that dealer in precious stones, who having one pearl of extreme beauty and value offered to him, determines to sell all his present possessions, that he may purchase this pearl. Herein he does not act an extravagant or foolish part, for he knows that this jewel is of such intrinsic worth, that, in a short time, he shall be able to reimburse himself with ample profit. In like manner you, my disciples, are acting a very wise part. You are hazard- ing many temporal joys. You are parting, it may be, with earthly possessions, but you are securing a noble recompence. You are laying up treasures in heaven which cannot be wrested from you."

*The kingdom of God, said our Saviour*  
R upon

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upon another occasion, *is within you* \*.  
*i. e.* A meetness, and capacity for its divine  
 delights, must be formed in the mind.  
 Without this, the pearl of inestimable  
 value: the jewel beyond all price: peace  
 of conscience, joy in the holy spirit, and  
 the eternal favour of God, cannot be ours.

In endeavouring to make this subject  
 useful, I shall, *first*, point out some of those  
 false means of bliss which occupy the hu-  
 man mind; and, *secondly*, press upon you  
 an earnest pursuit of true riches.

I. The human race are all in search of  
 pearls of one kind or other. Like mer-  
 chants, they are passing, if not from coun-  
 try to country, yet from place to place,  
 and from one, to another situation in life.  
 There is one jewel in particular, after  
 which all are panting, and that is happi-  
 ness, or content. To find this every pow-  
 er, both of body and mind, is put in mo-  
 tion. Expedient after expedient is de-  
 vised. The elements are ransacked, and  
 the dominions of nature explored on

\* Luke xvii. 21.

every



every side. Where shall the place of happiness be found?—is the general question. Where is the abode of bliss?—is echoed from all quarters. Many are the millions of the human race, and almost as numerous are the notions of happiness which they form. From this diversity of opinion, result many of the pursuits, and plans of felicity, to which every day is giving birth. That vast multitudes of these plans should fail, can be matter of no surprise. They are almost all founded in a misapprehension of what is truly good. They are confined either to the body; to that exercise of the mind which terminates in present things; or to the efforts of mere speculation. The illustration of this thought will make the first branch of my subject.

A great multitude of the human race, are literally imitating the merchant in the parable: they are seeking pearls and jewels. A mass of gold, and silver, they foolishly imagine will afford them complete happiness. Their affections are set upon this shining dust, and frequently,

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they devise unfair, and oppressive means of collecting it. The cry of the poor, whose faces they grind, and the labourers, whose hire they withhold, rises in the ears of the Lord of Hosts. These are a band of ignoble, vulgar spirits. Whatever figure they may make in the world, they are only slaves in gilded chains. The prejudices, and mistakes of their fellow mortals may pronounce them great, and honourable, and happy, but these are empty sounds. Their accumulating hoards cannot purchase the pearl of great price. Their hearts must be changed; their affections, and desires must receive a new direction, or true, durable bliss cannot be theirs.

To the ambitious a different set of objects is presented, but they are equally remote from the power of bestowing felicity. The pageantry of courts dazzles their senses; the crooked morality of politicians, warps their hearts. The thunder of the battle, at which humanity shudders: the laurel which, even in what are called the best causes, drops with the tears of the widow,

widow, and the orphan: the empty titles which flattery, and adulation pronounce; —What are they all in the sober hour of reflection? With a wounded conscience, which must be frequently the portion of characters like these, what happiness can possibly exist? The sun of prosperity shines in vain when the mind is at war with itself.

The voluptuous, and dissipated, form another class of beings, who are seeking the pearl of happiness where it can never be found. They do not, like those we first contemplated, dig for it in the bowels of the earth: nor, like the second class, expect it at the levees of the great, or in the field of carnage. They are destitute of the perseverance, and courage, necessary to either of these. On the contrary, they waste their lives in a succession of low, and degrading pleasures. They expect felicity in mere change. Repeated disappointment convinces them of their error, but still they persist in treading the same circle.

*They put far from them the evil day. They lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves*



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*upon couches: they eat the lambs out of the flock, and calves out of the midst of the stall. They chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music; they drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments\*. Alas! how mistaken are these men: in scenes of riot, and impurity, happiness never dwelt.*

We must not forget another set of merchants, who, though not equally vicious, are, in general, as unsuccessful as the rest. They are the votaries of what is termed elegant, and refined pleasure. Their pleasures are not sought in the haunts of gross licentiousness. Their manners are gentle; and they affect to be the patrons and protectors of those arts which embellish society. To sum up the whole in one word, they are men of *taste*. What a pity that we cannot add, they are men of religion also! but truth will not permit this. Though she is glad to praise where she can, she will not prostitute her applause. She is, therefore, compelled to close the account with declaring, that amidst all

\* Amos vi. 5, &c.

the pearls, and curiosities that adorn the cabinets, and museums of taste, the pearl of true happiness is not to be found.

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I shall mention one class more, and quit this part of the subject; it consists of men of science, and speculation. They are acquainted, as far as it is possible, with all the arcana of nature; they frequently investigate revelation; and, with unwearyed, not to say, unhallowed curiosity, play about the surface of the *deep things of God*. Humility does not accompany such researches as these, a desire of holiness is not their spring; and the possession of comfort cannot be their result. With respect to God, it is but little, indeed, that we can discover. "Clouds and darkness" are round about him, and it is his will that they should be so. It betrays pride, and folly, to waste our time, and abilities upon subjects in which it is impossible we should succeed. We may *darken counsel by words without knowledge*, but the barrier is utterly impassable. The finger of God has inscribed upon it, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further*. Let us own our

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ignorance

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ignorance. Let us repress our unholy curiosity. Let us stop, and adore. Otherwise, the pearl of true felicity will never be ours.

This leads me,

II. To press upon you an earnest pursuit after true and durable riches. As a motive to this, I observe,

1. There is only *one pearl* which can satisfy the soul of man; and that is, the possession of that temper and spirit, which it is the grand object of the gospel to produce. *The peace of God, which passeth all understanding*, is the consequence of this; and this peace is the only spring of substantial joy. The treasure hid in a field: the pearl, which an experienced merchant will sell all that he has to purchase, is the pure, operating gospel of Christ. He who possesses this may well be termed rich. He is rich beyond all expression! He is rich for eternity!

The first head of this discourse was intended to shew, that nothing but an assurance of an interest in the promises  
of



of the gospel was sufficient for the peace of an immortal spirit. This is evident from the following consideration. Man must often recollect that this world is not to close his existence. If, therefore, he has no foundation for hope in another life, he must be miserable. If all the pearls he is possessed of are the glittering baubles of time, he dares not anticipate futurity, or venture a single thought beyond the grave.

Professors of the religion of Jesus! consider these things. We are all placed in the gospel-field. The pearl of great price is within our reach. The prize of immortal happiness is offered to every hand; and if we finally fall short of it, God cannot be blamed. We had eyes to see, and we had ears to hear. We had means of grace, and hopes of glory; and, if we neglected or despised them, shall we dare to complain? If we were base enough to be scrambling for trifles, when we might have had crowns of unfading joy, where must the weight of reproach fall?

Where

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Where ought it to fall, but upon our own guilty and miserable heads?

I observe, therefore,

2. We cannot expect to find this pearl, except we seek it. That it is worth our search, every thing which has been already advanced will prove. If earth disappoints us, why not seek after heaven? If the pleasures of a good conscience are so desirable, how infinitely more desirable must it be to prolong and possess these for ever! But how is this precious jewel to be obtained? Listen: God has invited us to the search, and he has also given us the means of acquiring it. The gospel of Christ is for salvation to the ends of the earth, and in that gospel the pearl of great price is contained. Thus, under another figure, the unlimited invitation runs: *Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat: yea, come buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?*

*Hearken*

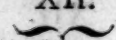
*Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness: incline your ear, and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live.*

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It is impossible that language should be more express and encouraging than this; and, therefore, it reduces the matter to a very narrow compass. It leaves us without excuse, if we will not do our utmost to obtain this glorious, this immortal prize. The treasures of earth, mean as they are, in a comparative view, cannot, in general, be procured without great labour. This is not only universally known, but cheerfully submitted to. It is the language of the wise man: *In all labour there is profit*; and it evidently implies two things: that labour is necessary to the acquisition of profit; and, that the previous labour gives a sweetness to the reward. Now if labour is cheerfully undergone to procure even the bread which perisheth, shall we hesitate a moment when eternal salvation is before us? Not, if we have a grain of true wisdom.

*Seek, and ye shall find,* is the animating language



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language of our divine Instructor. Ye followers of Jesus, listen to his voice: Come, with humble and teachable spirits: Come, with broken and contrite hearts: Come, with sincere and holy desires, and the fountain of life and salvation shall be opened unto you. *In that day, when the gospel of Christ shall be made known in the earth, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.* This promise has, undoubtedly, a principal reference to the Jews; but, as descriptive of the purifying nature of the gospel, it applies to all nations. In this fountain of holiness, O ye Gentiles, also *wash and be clean.* Dismiss the idols to which you have been formerly devoted. Lay aside that attachment to the trifles of the present world; that childish affection to dress and equipage; that anxious thirst after wealth and worldly honour, which are so degrading to reasonable and immortal beings; and rise to nobler and better things. Wake to the pursuit of durable riches and righteousness: to the acquisition

tion of that holy temper; which will bless you on earth, and prepare you for heaven. If sincere and earnest, you shall not be unsuccessful. The pearl of great price; the pearl of true, immortal, heavenly happiness shall be yours.

This brings me to remark

3. That we shall make a wise bargain, whatever losses we sustain, if we finally secure this pearl. Our blessed Lord faithfully told his apostles and followers what they had to expect.—That the power and malice of the world would be directed against them; that they would be brought before kings and rulers for his name's sake. But, it is as if he had said, "Regard not these things; your career shall not be stopped, till you have scattered far and wide the seeds of celestial truth. The winds of persecution shall blow you from country to country; but your progress will not be unnoticed. Men will be roused by your example. They will be taught reflection by your sufferings. Thousands will ask the question, why do these men thus expose themselves to danger, and suffer

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fer the loss of friends and comfort? and the answer will be, it is in the cause of God, and truth. Who is God? and what is truth? will then be demanded. You see, my friends, the result of all this. The angel of God has descended upon the waters. The stagnating pool of indifference is agitated; and, by the co-operation of my heavenly Father, the most glorious consequences will follow. As for yourselves, what do you lose? a life of comparative indolence and uselessness! A few of the fleeting possessions of the present hour. The affection, it may be, of some interested, blind, half-thinking friends. But, in return, what do you gain? The approbation of God. The unspeakable satisfaction of enlightening and liberating the world. A consciousness of promoting the everlasting happiness of man; and a full assurance that, hereafter, a crown of incorruptible glory will be placed on your head; and a pearl of incalculable worth put into your hand." How did the apostle of the Gentiles feel all this, when he wrote these words: *But what things were*  
*gain*



*gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ : yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.*

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My fellow professors ! I persuade myself that at this moment we all think alike upon this grand point. We think that no sacrifice is too great for the joys of an eternal existence : that the pearl of great price can never be purchased too dearly. Behold ! the children of this world. What slaves to fashion, and caprice ! how jaded they frequently are in pursuing the dubious pleasures of this momentary existence ? And shall they outstrip us, who have pure celestial joys in prospect ? Shall the votaries of Mammon dig in the mine, and labour till they pant and almost expire for a little glittering dust ? What a reproach ; if crowns of glory, treasures which cannot perish, make no impression upon our hearts !

Professors of religion ! be ye sure of this,  
that

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that the salvation of God is nigh unto you.

The pearl of unspeakable worth is put into your hands. See then that ye cast it not away. Be not satisfied with a little religion. *Seek* and strive after *great things*. Be filled with faith and holiness. God has united these, and woe be to him who dares to tear them from each other. By faith I do not mean a mere assent to the truths of revelation; but a firm persuasion that all the promises and threatnings of the gospel, are, *yea, and amen*, in Christ Jesus. This faith justifies, for it is a vital operative principle. It governs the temper as well as enlightens the understanding. This faith gives the victory over the world, the flesh, and temptation. It purifies and humbles the heart; it *works by love*; it bows to every divine command; it *obtains promises*; it *endures as seeing him who is invisible*; it draws the heart to devotion; it sanctifies the lip, and the life; it prepares us for an unseen world. Brethren! may this divine principle be vigorous in all our hearts. May our relish for heavenly

heavenly things be daily encreasing. May we set a just value upon the pearl of great price; and when we have done with it upon earth, may we wear it for ever in the paradise of God. Amen.

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SERMON XIII.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 6.

He is risen.

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THERE never was a fact better authenticated than the resurrection of Jesus. The circumstances attending his interment; the place in which his body was laid; the precautions taken by his enemies; and the unaffected surprize of his friends, when they found the sepulchre empty, afford a body of evidence uncommonly strong.

His disciples, it is clear, had no expectation that he would in this manner triumph over the grave. The intention of those affectionate and pious females, who

who came to the sepulchre at the dawn of the third day, was to anoint a dead, not to converse with a living body. In their way, we are informed, they asked each other, the natural question, "How shall we get away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" When they arrived at the place, this difficulty vanished. The stone was removed; and a celestial form, enlightening the dawn with his presence, was sitting upon it. It is no wonder that curiosity and affection, now gave place to alarm. The courageous votaries of a crucified Lord were afraid to proceed. Their terror was not unobserved, and the benevolent spirit hastened to dissipate their fears. *Fear ye not, I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified; he is not here, for he is risen as he said; come, see the place where the Lord lay.* He then reminds them of the former declarations of Jesus, and refers them, for full satisfaction, to those joyful events which were immediately to take place. *Go your way quickly, and tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him as he said*

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unto you. Surely, we may ask—was there ever a scene of fraud so conducted?

CHRISTIANS, come and see where the Lord lay! What do you behold? A heap of dust? A body stretched in death, and only preserved by fear-cloth and spices from corruption? No. It is an empty sepulchre, a vacant tomb that you contemplate. The body, which for a few hours rested there, has quitted it for ever. Your Lord is not here, *he is risen.* What important results, what eternal consequences, are included in this little sentence! Let us meditate upon it.

He is risen. Yes, Christians! your Redeemer has left the prison house of the grave, and ascended, with all the vigour of immortality, to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thither, with the confidence of conviction, and the ardour of faith, let our thoughts frequently follow him. The remembrance of a glorified Lord will elevate your affections, and afford a salutary check to the perplexities of a vain and transitory world. The resurrection of Jesus, is the basis of your im-
mortal

mortal hopes. *Now, says the Apostle, is Christ risen, and become the first fruits of them that slept.* Thus did the Eternal Jehovah seal the mission, and ratify all the declarations of his son. *He raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*

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HE *is risen.* The veracity of God is established, and the truth of scriptural prophecies indisputably confirmed. The faith of believers had been put to a severe trial. Prophets and righteous men, had beheld this day of triumph *afar off.* From the prediction in the garden of Eden, to the advent of the Messiah, four thousand years had elapsed. When he did appear, the *form and comeliness* which national vanity suggested, were wholly invisible. His countrymen expected a mere earthly hero, a conquering and victorious monarch; and instead of this, they saw a humble and suffering prophet. *The serpent had bruised his heel.*

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Amidst the horrors of insult and crucifixion, the expected Redeemer had lately expired. Faith, in all the bitterness of disappointment, hung over the bloody scene. The supporting anchor fell from the hand of hope, and her ardent eye, which can cheer the gloomiest recess of adversity, was dimmed by the tragedy of Calvary. The powers of darkness were triumphant. The hopes of humanity were crushed. Dismayed by the storm which beat upon them, the followers of our Lord were dispersed. One of the chief denied that he knew him; and, *we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel*, was the desponding language of them all.

The promises to Abraham, the predictions of Moses, the repeated declarations of the prophets, seemed all buried in the tomb of Jesus. But inscrutable are the proceedings of the all-wise God. Even now, from this accumulated, midnight gloom, the sun of righteousness was preparing to break forth. The morning of the *third day* dawns. The pontifical seal is yet unbroken. The guards are all
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at their post. But what are such obstacles? What is the puny weakness of man opposed to the omnipotence of God? The first ray of light which pierces the gloom, is the signal of triumph. The redemption of man lingers no longer. The earth quakes. The angel descends. The stone is rolled away. Majestic and immortal, the Saviour quits the bed of death. *The head of the serpent is crushed.* The jubilee of the children of men is proclaimed. Heaven and earth *may*, heaven and earth *will* pass away; but not an iota of all which God has purposed shall ever fail. Christians! let not your faith stagger. Your Maker is not a man that he should lie, or the Son of man that he should forego his purpose. Ages may expect the fulfilment of his predictions, and ages may be disappointed; but still his word is sure, and endureth for ever. The Saviour was promised, the Saviour came, the Saviour was crucified, and, oh! never let it be forgotten, the Saviour arose.

HE *is risen.* Christianity is established. The resurrection of Jesus has fixed it on a

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rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. *The law of Moses which preceded it, made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did.* Now, in the seed of Abraham, were all the nations of the earth blessed. The standard of grace is lifted up, and the trumpet of the gospel blown. Remission of sins, upon sincere and unfeigned repentance, is everywhere proclaimed. The favour of heaven is declared, like all its gifts, impartial and unlimited. It is made evident, that *in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.* The throne of mercy is fully unveiled, and the access to it, in the name of Jesus, laid open to every human being. Could any doubt have remained upon this subject, the resurrection of Christ has done it away. The seal of heaven is, by this event, affixed to all his declarations. The returning sinner is sanctioned in his hope of pardon. Penitence and peace are united, under the auspices of Him, who is in Christ Jesus, *reconciling the world unto himself.*

CHRISTIANS! do not wrong your God;
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do not disgrace your Saviour; do not distress your own souls, by refusing the comforts of the Gospel. By a gloomy behaviour you cast from you, as much as you can, the mercies of your God. You dash from your lips the cup of consolation. Will you rely on the kindness of an earthly friend, and at the same time distrust the goodness of your Heavenly Benefactor? Surely, if such a conduct were considered it must be abandoned. What argument can you possibly offer for a dependance on human affection, which will not conclude, with tenfold force, in proof of Divine Love? Is your friend able to help you; and will you deny the ability of God? Is your friend wise to discern the precise time when his interposition will have the happiest influence; and is your God less wise? Is the affection of your friend the ground of your reliance, and can a doubt remain of the love of your Heavenly Parent? Is past experience the foundation of confidence, and have you received nothing from your God? Is life, with all its capacities and enjoyments, nothing?

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thing? Is the gift of *Jesus* for your instruction and redemption, nothing? Are the promises and prospects of the gospel, all nothing? Christians! bethink yourselves. You are sensible you possess powers of mind which exalt you above the beasts which perish; let not your conduct disgrace those powers. Be grateful for the religion of your Lord, and shew your gratitude by the performance of its duties. A Christian in profession, and an infidel in practice, is an insult to common sense. Consistency is the honour of the man; regulated by holiness, it is the salvation of the Christian.

He is risen. The empire of death is shaken. *Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?* The career of thy triumph is interrupted. No longer shall the proud boast of undisturbed empire be uttered. Except in two instances, thy triumph had hitherto been universal. Sin pointed the deadly shaft, and thy unerring bow had fixed it in every human bosom. But there was a day; Children of Adam pronounce your hallelujahs; there was a day, when an angelic voice proclaimed concerning

cerning a captive of death, *He is risen!* SERM.
The sound echoed through the mansions XIII.
of the grave, and the despot of those silent
domains trembled on his dusky throne. He
felt a presage of that final period when
the voice of the archangel, the trumpet
of God, and the second descent of the Sa-
viour, shall annihilate his dominion.—Chris-
tians! away with your fears. Death reign-
ed from Adam to Christ; he shall reign
from Christ to the consummation of all
things, but then his power shall terminate.
He is the *last enemy*, but he shall not be
left unvanquished. Every returning Sab-
bath reminds us of the day when the re-
surrection of Christ interrupted the career
of his conquests; and as surely as that
event has taken place, shall the day come,
when death shall be swallowed up in the
final victory of Jesus!

Convince yourselves, my fellow pro-
fessors, of the truth, and frequently place
before your minds the consequences of
this event. You will find it an invulnera-
ble shield against the arrows of infidelity;
and a broad defence from the assaults of
those

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those doubts and fears which are often harassing the pious mind. It will convince us of the most solemn, and consolatory truths. It will sublime our thoughts. Even while upon earth it will place us in a higher abode, and enable us *to walk by faith, and not by sight.*

As a proper improvement of this subject, I shall lead your thoughts to what our Lord has taught us concerning a future state. His doctrines on this head seem in a peculiar manner to be connected with his resurrection. In the course of his ministry he delivered various predictions. Amongst others, he foretold the sufferings he was to undergo, and asserted, that on the third day he should rise from the grave, and actually enter upon the administration of that spiritual kingdom, which he had begun to establish in the world. How exactly and triumphantly all this was fulfilled, we have just been considering. An apostle has taught us to infer the resurrection of the members from that of the head; and therefore we cannot be more suitably employed

ployed than in attending to the interesting consequences of that event.

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I. Our divine Instructor has assured us, that the resurrection of the dead will be followed by an universal and full investigation of human actions. The secrets of all hearts are to be laid open, and the actions of all lives weighed in the balances of heaven. *Then, he has told us, shall the Son of man be seated on the throne of his glory; and before him all nations shall be gathered, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.* Then, as the glorious reward of his exertions and sufferings for the redemption of the world, he shall be commissioned to pronounce the final sentence. Of the truth of these solemn assertions, the resurrection of him who made them is offered as an indubitable pledge. The God of truth would never have sanctioned a falsehood, and raised an imposture from the dead. May all the professing disciples of Jesus lay this to their hearts,

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hearts, and act like men who believe the predictions of their Lord.

If a day of account will certainly arrive, and if our eternal situation will be fixed by it, it must be the part of prudence to prepare for its approach. Integrity, humility and faith, through the mercy of God, are the grand terms of acceptance in that decisive hour. Every false hope, every *refuge of lies*, will then fail. The mask of hypocrisy must drop, for nothing but sincerity of heart can be accepted at that impartial bar. Never let us forget the consequences of the sentence which our Lord will then pronounce. To the good, *glory, honour, and immortality*. To the bad, tribulation, anguish, and despair.

In the *first* appearance of our Lord, the accents of peace hung upon his lips. To direct mankind in the path of life, to reveal the placability of God, and induce them, by the tenderest motives, to seek his favour, was the object of his addresses. The character he will sustain in his *second* appearance, will be of a very different nature.

ture. His disposition cannot change, but symbols of the highest glory and authority will dignify his person. The solemnity of the Judge, the triumph of the Victor, and the majesty of the universal Monarch, will wipe away the infamy of crucifixion, and obliterate the dishonours of the tomb. His first triumph over death was distinguished by an earthquake, and a partial victory over the grave; his final conquest will be graced by the wrecks of a dissolving world, and an universal resurrection!

II. Our blessed Redeemer has not only assured us that there will be a future state; but has informed us, that to all his faithful followers it will be a state of eternal joy. Of this truth he has made his own resurrection the pledge, *Because I live, ye shall live also. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you; but now I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also.*—Where now is the darkness which enveloped the grave? Where now is the cloud which brooded over futurity? Beyond it,

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it, behold! our Father's house, the city that hath foundations; the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Christian! wipe away the falling tear; it becomes thee not. Art thou in possession of earthly joys, the joys of heaven are of a nobler kind! Art thou almost fainting with a load of sorrows, anticipate *the rest which remaineth for the people of God.* Art thou in the morning of thy days, *seek in the first place the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof,* and if thy Saviour is to be credited, every necessary good shall be added unto thee. Art thou in the middle of life, amidst the whirl of amusements, and the distraction of business, suffer not thy better hopes to be torn from thee. Remember the value of thy soul, and what a loss thou wilt sustain, if the acquisition, even of the whole world, be the miserable exchange! Hast thou seen many days, hast thou been long worn in the rugged path of life, rejoice, that the end of thy journey is in view. A few more steps, and thou shalt reach
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thy Father's house. Frequently, my fellow Christians, of all ages and ranks, meditate on the narrative of your Lord's resurrection. Review it, not as a tale to satisfy curiosity, but as the grand pillar of your faith, and the pledge of your immortal hopes. Read it with gratitude to God, by whose almighty power it was effected. Read it with love to Jesus, who by his death rendered this pledge of our resurrection possible. Read it in the day of prosperity, it will purify, it will exalt your joy. Read it in the hour of distress, it will brighten the darkest sky, it will support you under the heaviest pressure. Read it in the moment of doubt, and no unfulfilled prediction will shake your faith. When devotion languishes in your bosoms, read this interesting history, and you will glow with a sense of the love of God, and exclaim with the apostle—*O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. He who spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all,*

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how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things?

When those in whose lives your own are almost bound up, are removed to an unseen world, call to your remembrance the Resurrection of Christ, and draw the consoling inference, *As Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, will God bring together with him. Amen.*

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

PSALM XLII. 4.

I went — to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise ; with a multitude that kept holy-day.

THESE words directly lead us to the subject of public worship. They inform us of the practice of David himself, in the seasons of his prosperity. It was his uniform custom, and the joy of his heart, to attend the solemnities of the tabernacle. We also find he was not a solitary worshipper. A multitude went with him to the sacred courts. It was, in their estimation, a felicity too great to be neglected.

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neglected. They were glad when the mutual exhortation sounded in their ears, "*Let us go up to the house of the Lord.*" Joy glowed in their hearts, and the language of gratitude and praise vibrated on their lips, while they kept holy-day unto Jehovah.

I shall endeavour briefly to unfold the *nature*, shew the *obligations*, and display the *advantages* of public worship.

In all ages and countries, of which we have obtained any information, the sentiment—that the Creator and Lord of the world ought to be publicly adored, has been felt. Here the Pagan, the Jew, and the Christian speak a common language, and act upon a common principle. Sincere affectionate piety cannot be satisfied with whispering its devotions in the closet. Silent admiration does not appear a sufficient homage to the august and delightful Object who occupies its best thoughts, and raises into rapture its purest affections. It looks round for companions to whom it may tell its joys. It wishes to communicate the devotional feeling. It
longs

longs for aid in celebrating those perfections to which, it conceives, a solitary, silent homage is too poor an offering.

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Public Worship thus appears to be dictated by the best principles of the human heart. Multitudes have sanctioned it by their practice; and in those multitudes are to be reckoned, if not absolutely *all*, yet a vast majority of the wisest and most virtuous characters of all times and places. Those who have despised and neglected public devotion have, generally, consisted of the giddy, the worldly-minded, and the notoriously profligate. This is a matter of *fact*; and it requires no laboured comment to point out whether it concludes for or against public worship.

Upon this ground, no one need to blush for being an advocate for public worship; but, as believers in revelation, we have infinitely stronger reasons to produce.

If there is a God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, he must be worthy of every possible honour. If this God has informed us in what manner we may render him our homage, an implicit deference to

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that information is both a duty and a privilege.

As Christians, we glory in asserting, that the Lord of the universe has favoured us with a book inspired by his own spirit—A volume which is able to make us *wise unto salvation; being profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* This volume contains express directions and examples upon this subject. The question, therefore, is simply this: shall the reason of the thing, the practice of the wisest and best men of all ages, and the commands and exhortations of God himself, be set at defiance? For my own part, I do not see how it is possible for those who admit the divine authority of the New Testament, to deny the obligation of attending public worship. It is true, the command for keeping the Sabbath is not there repeated; but it is also true, that our Lord has no where abrogated it. On the contrary, the directions he has given for mitigating the rigour of the Mosaic observance, and the express declaration, that *the Sabbath was made for man*, are proofs that

that he contemplated, and intended its continuance among his followers.

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After the resurrection of Jesus, and from the pouring out of the spirit on the day of Pentecost, it is certain that his disciples observed this divine institution. They spent in devotional exercises, and as soon as they durst in a public manner, the same portion of time which their countrymen observed.

I shall here say a few words upon the Christian Sabbath, and then return to the general subject of Public Worship.

Had the change from the *seventh*, to the *first* day of the week, been displeasing to Almighty God, there is no doubt but plain information would have been given of it. The first believers in the Saviour, and the persons who were to promulgate his religion, would not have been left in the dark upon such a subject. The reasons for the change are so striking as, with a very few exceptions, to have satisfied the minds of all Christians. Did the *seventh* day commemorate the material creation, and the rest of God from his glorious work? The

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first celebrates the new and spiritual creation, and the completion of that train of prophecies by which faith had been exercised for four thousand years. Did the *seventh* day of the week keep in remembrance the deliverance of the Israelites from the yoke of Pharaoh? The *first* is dedicated to a far more glorious object. It commemorates the rescue of a world from a captivity infinitely more dreadful than the bondage of Egypt. The one wore out the body, but the other killed the soul. The one bore hard upon a single nation, but the other extended through all the race. In one case, it was the God of the Hebrews liberating a chosen people. In the other, it is the Lord of all, glorifying his impartiality and grace, and proving that he is no respecter of persons.

Under the local dispensation of Moses, the tabernacle and the temple were the only places in which public, acceptable offerings could be tendered to the God of heaven. Under the comprehensive and liberal dispensation of Jesus, all places are pure, all times are acceptable, where there
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are clean hands and an holy heart. It is the temper of the worshipper, and not the external form of the worship, which the God of the universe regards.

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The throne of God is at all times, and in all places, accessible; but this affords no argument for the neglect of public worship. On the contrary, it is a reason for multiplying the temples of JEHOVAH, and never forsaking those services which are rendered thus easy unto us. The language of the writer to the Hebrews upon this subject, appears to me to be equivalent to a command—*Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is.* The force of the exhortation lies in this; that the neglecting to assemble was a breach of known duty.

When thou prayest, says our Lord, enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father who is in secret. This has been ingeniously turned into an argument against public worship, of which social prayer is the essence: but the fallacy of such argument is easily detected. The Pharisees, to procure the reputation of exalted

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exalted piety, put up their individual prayers in the synagogues, and at the corners of streets, on purpose that multitudes might witness their devotions. In opposition to this glaring hypocrisy, and not to social prayer in worshipping assemblies, did our Lord give the direction to enter into our closets, and utter prayers in secret.

In a word, public worship is supported by reason, by common sense, and by the plain command and blessing of God. Till something which can outweigh all these can be produced against it, it will obtain the suffrage of the enlightened understanding, and secure the affection of the well-disposed heart. Let the general conduct of those who forsake it be observed, and we shall not see much to induce us to join their standard. We are witnesses that it adds neither to their wisdom, to their virtue, nor to their comfort.

Upon what has been said, I shall rest the *reasonableness* and *obligation* of public worship: I now proceed to offer a few thoughts upon its *nature* and *advantages*.

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For a long time it was a generally prevailing notion, that it was necessary to approach God through the medium of sacrifices, offered in a variety of ways. In the patriarchal ages, and during the authorized continuance of the Jewish economy, this mode was sanctioned; at first by the approbation, and afterwards by the express appointment of the Almighty. Animals and vegetables of the choicest kinds were selected for this purpose: and, in clouds of fragrant incense, the confession, the supplication, or the thanksgiving, rose to heaven. All this, however, suited only an age of twilight. It had, more or less, a tendency to shackle the soul in its noblest conceptions, and keep out of view the spirituality and holiness of the great object of worship. This was so obvious, that the Prophets were frequently directed to turn the attention of their countrymen from the symbols to the things which they signified; from the sacrifices to the affections of the mind which they were intended to influence, and to that pure morality which they were designed to inculcate and preserve. I shall content myself with transcribing one passage

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passage to this purpose : *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

Under the New Dispensation all these symbols and shadows are done away. The Christian High-priest, by one grand sacrifice of himself, has terminated sacrifices for ever. The Gospel Prophet has proclaimed; *God is a spirit, and he must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.* He must be adored, not with carnal oblations of bulls and goats: but with spirituality of conception, simplicity of form, purity of heart, and holiness of life.

The parts of public service which can properly be termed worship, are *three*; Prayer, praise, and reading the word of God. Sermons, however excellent and useful



useful they may be, cannot be considered as worship to God; and, therefore, I shall make one plain remark to such professors as frequently come *late* to our public assemblies; perhaps, almost, or quite at the close of their devotional parts. They may gratify their curiosity; they may give an opiate to their consciences; they may keep up a little decency of appearance in the world; but they cannot be said, in such cases, to worship God at all. It belongs to *them* to consider what apology they will, hereafter, make for their conduct.

I consider hearing portions of the Divine Word, publicly read in our assemblies, properly a part of divine worship; because it is of the highest importance that we should know what the scriptures contain; and because it is a just tribute of reverence to Him in whose name they come to us. Our punctual attendance upon this part of worship is one proof that we are willing to receive the law from God's mouth. It has a direct tendency to give us just notions of God and divine things;

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things ; and to put us in a proper frame for prayer and praise.

Every argument which proves it is proper to pray to God at all, concludes, with equal force, for addressing Him in public, and in company with each other. If it is probable that the sight of multitudes, all engaged as we are ourselves, will more deeply impress our minds, and better dispose us for the discharge of duty, than a solitary worship in our private chambers ; this is a powerful and distinct argument in favour of social devotion. Who, at all acquainted with human nature, is insensible to the effect which numbers engaged in any pursuit will produce ? We are formed with social propensities. Man loves to meet his fellow man. Is the foot-stool of God the only place where we should wish to separate ? Is it no joy to the Christian who loves his Master and his God ; who ardently wishes for the happiness of his fellows, to see throngs of them employed in a way so suitable to their noble capacities, and so conducive to their eternal welfare ?

I trust

I trust these pages will be read by many who can adopt the language of the Psalmist: *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy. Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy holiness; and the place where thine honour dwelleth.*

With the often agitated question, whether, in public devotion, a *pre-composed form*, or what is termed *free prayer*, is the best, I interfere not at all. I have no doubt, multitudes of acceptable prayers have ascended to heaven in every possible form. Let every one be persuaded in his own mind, and let not a difference of mode beget either contempt or dislike. Every sincere and pious worshipper agrees in the main thing; which is to perform what they all esteem an important duty, in the most solemn and acceptable manner.

To recognise and celebrate the divine glories, is not only a reasonable, but a delightful employment. *Singing*, either with or without instrumental music, is a delightful



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ful part of social worship. To hear a multitude of human voices united in one melodious burst of gratitude and praise, is grateful to the ear of devotion. To say all in a word ; it is the best picture of heavenly rapture which earth can furnish.

Suffer me to say a word or two upon the *manner* in which we should appear before God ; for we should never forget that, in public worship, we profess to do this in a way the most express and deliberate. JEHOVAH is the SOLE fountain of all the majesty, beauty, and goodness of the universe. With what profound reverence should such peerless, inconceivable grandeur strike our minds ? A sovereign, a father, a benefactor, a judge, are ideas we can grasp. Under these characters it has pleased the blessed God to reveal himself to us ; and, consequently, reverence, confidence, gratitude and veneration, should all combine in making up that frame of spirit with which we should visit our places of public worship. It follows, that the utmost composure and decency of deportment is required from us at such seasons. Shall we

we idly gaze about, shall we laugh or whisper; shall we be restless or asleep? These would be utterly improper in the presence of a prince; during the solemnities of a court of justice; or when a wise and tender father was in the very act of communicating instruction. How much more then, must every thing of this sort be indefensible in the worshippers of an omnipotent, all-seeing, holy, and jealous God? My dear readers, be upon your guard! Who is free from danger? Habits of this kind, without the utmost vigilance, will creep on: they are easily contracted, and with difficulty broken. I shall take this opportunity of saying, that I wish *our* places of worship were fitted for kneeling in prayer. We are poor imperfect creatures, and we need every assistance to keep us humble and serious.

I shall now briefly notice some of the advantages which may be expected from a conscientious attendance on public worship; and then conclude this discourse.

1. By a regular attendance upon divine ordinances, we may expect to feel more

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powerfully the force of religious principles. However well we may employ our time in solitude, the soul cannot, in general, be so interested and affected as in society. Amid the solemnities of public worship we shall feel a deeper reverence for the Divine Majesty, and have a livelier perception of the Divine Grace, than in any other situation. Humility will be more deep; faith will be more firm; and benevolence more diffusive! Professedly bending with our fellow-worshippers, at the foot-stool of God, we give a public pledge of our sincerity. This, by the Divine blessing, will confirm every virtuous principle, and be a strong guard against future transgression.

2. By an attendance on public worship, we set an example to all; and especially to the rising generation. It is one proof that we are in earnest when we press upon them the duties, and talk to them of the privileges of piety. We thus show a regard to the divine honour; and give a pledge to society, that we are in the number of its best friends. If every man and  
woman



woman were such characters as worshippers of God ought to be, earth would need nothing but the absence of pain and death, to change it into heaven.

3. In a devout and honest attendance upon public worship we may confidently expect the divine blessing. It is a solemn promise; *Those that honour me, I will honour. They shall come with acceptance unto mine altar; and I will glorify the house of my glory.* It is thus evident, that a conscientious and regular attendance on divine ordinances, is of the highest importance. It is calculated to render our own characters wiser and better. It is likely to make us blessings, in the best sense, to society; and, connected with a consistent conduct, it will secure us the favour and acceptance of God. Christians, these are not small benefits, and, I hope, many of you can experimentally say; *Blessed is the man, O Lord! whom thou choolest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts. They that be planted in the courts of the Lord shall flourish in the house of our*

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*God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.*

I conclude with an address to two classes of readers—those who neglect; and those who attend public worship.

God is worthy of every possible honour; but the neglecter of public worship defrauds him of his most express earthly homage. The honour of Jesus is kept up by worship presented to God, in his name: but the man who absents himself from the public assembly, refuses to ratify his christian profession. He virtually confesses himself ashamed of the cross of Christ; and, in this respect, he unchristianises, and cuts himself off from the church.

The knowledge and hopes of the gospel are the means of reforming, and saving the world; but the neglecter of public worship stops the diffusion of these blessings. He forbids, by his conduct, the distribution of the bread of life. He disheartens the minister whom he ceases to attend; and discourages the disciple with whom he was once a companion and fellow-worshipper. This is not an overcharged picture, for if  
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one may neglect the house of God with impunity and reputation, so may another: and if the fatal example were to become universally prevalent, what I have said would actually take place. Professors, trifle not with your privileges; they *may* be taken from you. What has been, may be again. The celebrated churches of Asia were once numerous and full: where are they now?

The neglecter of public worship is an enemy to the morals, and good order of society, and to the final welfare of his generation. So far as his example operates, he becomes more and more criminal. If, through him, any become less virtuous and useful than they might have been, their follies and crimes are, in a degree, chargeable on his head. Men and brethren! I leave these faithful warnings to God, and your own consideration.

With pleasure I address, I hope, a large majority of my readers. You have *loved the gates of Sion*. The return of the sabbath, or of any devotional season, is gratifying and delightful to your souls. You



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have often felt, in Divine ordinances, a rapture which language can ill describe. Proceed in your virtuous, your honourable career. Come to the house of God, and drink of the waters of life. Confirm every virtuous purpose. Strengthen every holy resolution. Vivify every withering grace. Comfort your own hearts, and refresh the spirits of your fellow-worshippers. Show the young that you are not tired of public services. Convince those in middle life, that devotion hinders no business; and incapacitates for no rational pleasure. Give a pledge to the aged, that when their venerable heads are laid in the dust, the courts of the Lord shall not be forsaken. Go with them to the borders of the grave. Witness their conflict with the last enemy. Cheer them in the final agony. Tell them that you will tread in their steps, and, by divine grace, follow them to the upper world. To that world, disciples of Jesus! let all your affections be directed. There you shall realize every promised delight. There you shall join the virtuous of every preceding age. There pious friendship shall

shall glow with celestial ardour. Relatives shall re-embrace each other, and all be complete in him *who loved us, and gave himself for us*, that he might redeem us to his Father and his God. Sabbaths upon earth will then be over; but the perfect, eternal sabbath will be begun; and we shall enter the house of God, *to go out no more.* Amen.

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## SERMON XV.

ON THE FEAR OF GOD.

I KINGS XVIII. 3.

*Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly.*SERM.  
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**W**HAT a glorious eulogium is here pronounced on the character of this excellent man! In the midst of a licentious and idolatrous court, his faith and his morals were uncontaminated. When interest and fashion, both concurred to assail his virtue, he was proof against their seductions. When the rage of an impious and vindictive woman, menaced his allegiance to Jehovah with disgrace and death, his sacred fortitude remained unshaken.

The circumstance with which the text is connected, plainly proves that this was the



the real character of Obadiah. At a time when the demon of persecution, in the form of Jezabel, was hunting down the true worshippers of Jehovah; Obadiah, a courtier and a placeman, had the virtue to avow himself one of the number. He ventured to do more than this, by his active piety, he secreted the persons, and supplied the wants of no less than an hundred ministers of the true religion. This was a step which required prudence as well as resolution, and Obadiah showed that he possessed them both. True religion is not the offspring of enthusiasm; nor is the spirit of it best manifested by incurring unnecessary dangers, or casting *pearls before swine*. It is a course of action pursued under the influence of upright and benevolent principles. The grand object it has constantly in view, the polar star by which it is continually guided, is that honourable and holy fear of God, by which the heart of Obadiah was influenced. This taught him, though surrounded with temptations to idolatry, to worship only the true God. This induced him, notwithstanding

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standing the danger he incurred, to do all in his power to preserve, to happier times, the prophets of the Lord. The times were very dark, but the bosom in which true religion glows, does not easily despair. Obadiah knew, that however the wicked might be permitted to prevail for a season, their triumph could really be but short; and at any rate he had this consolation, that a *cup of cold water*, given to a virtuous sufferer, would never be forgotten by God.

No character in the world is so truly great as the man who, thus fearing the Lord, has his steps continually guided by his Heavenly Father. A well regulated fear of God, is the foundation of all true religion, and the ground of all acceptable worship. Happy, indeed, is the man who reposes under the protection of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. Let the unthinking and giddy laugh if they please; the character, who, like the ruler of Ahab's household, fears the Lord from his youth, is far beyond the reach of the senseless clamour. He walks, with majestic composure,

posure, in a region to which their folly can never rise; for he walks *with God*. SERM.  
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*The fear of the Lord*, says the Psalmist, *is the beginning of wisdom*. Let us endeavour to ascertain what is implied in this grand principle of action. It includes, I apprehend, the following particulars—a firm belief in the doctrine of Providence—a practical recognition of the divine attributes—an habitual sense of the divine presence, as noticing the moral behaviour of his creatures—an earnest wish, by an upright and conscientious conduct, to secure the divine approbation. Thus acted the excellent character mentioned in the text; for we are told, that he *feared the Lord greatly*.

1. The fear of the Lord rests upon a firm belief in the doctrine of Providence. There are multitudes who ascribe the creation of the world to Almighty Power, and to Consummate Wisdom, who yet suppose that there is no providential care exercised over it. “The system,” say they,  
“ was



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“ was perfect when the Great Creator pronounced it to be very good. It is unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that it is necessary for him to watch over or repair what he has furnished with a self-renovating power. The world is a piece of stupendous mechanism, and like all complete machines, when it is once put in motion, will go on as long as the *impetus* by which it is urged, continues to operate.”

To this it is easy to reply, there is no proof that the Almighty intended to leave the world in this manner to take care of itself; or, that he governs natural and moral agents by precisely the same laws. The system may fully deserve the epithet of perfect; and yet not possess that self-renovating power which is here ascribed to it. The Benevolence of the Deity, which must lead him to delight in the constant communication of good, will suggest a different conclusion; and lead us to suppose that his rectoral affection is never inattentive to his human offspring.

We are not, however, left to the deductions of mere reason upon this subject;  
the

the word of God assures us, that *the eyes of the Lord are upon the ways of men; that he fashions their hearts; fixes the bounds of their habitations; and executeth righteousness and judgment in the earth.* A firm conviction that these declarations are strictly true, is the basis of that fear of the Lord, which is the governing principle of the pious mind. Such a one is convinced that there is an Active Omniscience sitting at the helm of nature; that he is more than a match for the various dangers and hazards to which mankind are exposed; and that he will ever show himself the patron of moral excellence.

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The virtuous are frequently mingled with thoughtless, and even reprobate characters. In a state of trial this is necessary; but their chief support is, that God knows their hearts, and that he will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear. The Supreme Governor rides in every whirlwind, and regulates every storm. The clouds are the dust of his feet; he covers his people with his feathers; and delivers them when on the borders

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borders of despair. Who is there that would wish the world abandoned by its Maker? Who is not glad, that in the sacred volume, we are exhorted to cast our care upon God, *because* he careth for us?

2. The fear of the Lord includes a practical recognition of the Divine Attributes. These are usually enumerated under the terms of power, wisdom, and goodness. The fear which animates the devotion of the pious mind, is a filial, and not a slavish principle. It contemplates the Almighty as possessed of uncontrollable power. It views an insect, and an archangel, as equally within the reach of his arm. But this is the very basis of its consolation; for it hopes that, if necessary, this power will be exerted in its behalf.

Mere power, however, though it serves as a basis, would not, of itself, be sufficient to beget confidence in our minds. Unaccompanied by Wisdom and Goodness, it might even operate against us. The genuine fear of the Lord, therefore, includes a full conviction of his mercy and love.

To



To *fear the Lord, and his goodness*, is the beautiful exhortation of the devout Psalmist. SERM.  
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That the Governor of the World is good, the very circumstance that there are creatures in existence, who, from experience, can argue for it, is, perhaps, a sufficient proof. But we are not left to this alone. The glorious truth meets us in almost every page of the inspired volume. The mission and declarations, the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord, are arguments in its favour, which admit of no contradiction. To this amiable Being, the pious mind turns itself at all times with delight. It dwells with rapture on the creating, redeeming, pardoning, and bestowing goodness of God. Where so much has been imparted, it hopes and anticipates every thing.

That the Almighty is wise, as well as powerful and good, is an idea which also enters into that holy fear which we are now endeavouring to describe. As goodness will fill us with love; wisdom and power will inspire us with veneration. The  
union

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union of these three attributes is calculated to afford us a confidence which no common trial can disturb. Sometimes we can trace, for a little way, the plans of Providence. Every instance of this kind is, to the man of piety, a spur to action, and an anchor of hope. But when he can realize to his mind, power, wisdom, and goodness, all operating in the advancement of his welfare, no language can describe the sublime, triumphant acquiescence of his soul. *Father! not my will, but thine be done!* will breathe from the lip, and every chord of the heart will vibrate in unison with that sentiment.

3. The fear of the Lord includes an habitual sense of the Divine Presence. Were this persuasion deeply impressed upon the heart, we should not act as we too frequently do. Where is a servant remiss? Not in the presence of his master. But, blush, O Christian! in the very face of thy God thou art not merely careless, but criminal. What is it that can induce thee to run such an awful risk? Can God be deceived? Or will he be mocked with impunity?

impunity? To escape his notice is impossible. *The wings of the morning* cannot bear us beyond his reach. The shadows of the evening cannot conceal us from his eye. Nor heaven, nor earth, nor all the invisible world, can afford a shelter from his scrutiny. Even in the vain retreat thou art meditating from his presence, his arm must be thy support. It is a sense of this holy inspection, this all-pervading survey, which will be our best safeguard in the hour of temptation. *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* will be an argument not easily overcome.

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True piety will uniformly direct our highest regards to God. He is the judge of all actions, and the searcher of all hearts. If we can approve our conduct to him, and to our conscience, it will be of comparatively no importance, what a thoughtless and misjudging world may think or say concerning us. The idea that we are surrounded by divinity, will be the strongest guard upon our virtue, and the firmest stay of our hopes. Cherish, I entreat you, a notion so friendly to your best interests.

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Despise



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Despise not any consideration which has a tendency to form and establish a heavenly temper, and a holy life.

4. The fear of the Lord will be evinced by an earnest and constant endeavour to secure his approbation. Sensible that the divine favour is *better than life*, the man of piety will make it his prime object of pursuit. This will influence in every virtuous deed. This will predominate in every instance of self-denial. In the upright discharge of duty, this will be the governing principle. In the exercise of benevolence, this will be the grand motive. Upon all occasions this divine principle is fitted to operate. The wanderings of the imagination, when it wishes to investigate, with impertinent curiosity, the secrets of God, it will check. It will purify our love to the Supreme, and prevent any thing gross and carnal from mingling with it. It will dictate a holy reverence in our expressions to the All Perfect; and restrain that enthusiastic familiarity which is the disgrace of devotion. Remembering that God is in heaven, and we upon earth, our words  
before

before him will be *few and chosen*. In our social intercourse, we shall put a bridle upon our lips, and especially when the wicked are before us. We shall be peculiarly careful that religion does not suffer, by our light and unguarded references to divine things. While this fear of the Lord is upon us, we shall use *sound speech which cannot be blamed*: and, in a word, adorn our profession, and endeavour to walk worthy of the hope which is set before us.

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This is an outline of that sacred principle which is denominated the fear of the Lord—I shall attempt, in some degree, to fill it up, by delineating a character acting under its influence.

I will suppose him advanced beyond the morning of life. The season of acquiring the rudiments of knowledge is past. Those rudiments are to be applied. The path of life opens. A thousand enemies to his virtue and his peace throng about him. Illicit pleasure spreads the filken net. Intoxication reaches forth the sparkling cup. Avarice displays the loaded coffer. Ambition pronounces the sounding title, and

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points out the trappings which decorate the seats of power. It is not in human nature to be wholly unaffected. Our youth pauses. The pride of life dazzles his senses. His virtue staggers. He is almost persuaded, for these gilded toys, to barter immortal possessions: and to the mammon of unrighteousness to sacrifice the reversion of heaven. He is not, however, quite overcome. The fear of the Lord returns to his mind. The spell is dissolved. The delirium of temptation subsides. He starts from the precipice. He prays; and his prayer is heard. *The hands which hung down are reinvigorated, and the feeble knees are confirmed.* Thus he is the better for his trials. Danger has taught him circumspection. Strength is increased by exertion; and a humble diffidence of himself, has taught him to look up to God.

We have thus far, viewed this excellent character, only as a solitary individual: But it is one of the blessings of the righteous, that the Lord *setteth the solitary in families.* Let us now contemplate him as  
united



united to a companion whose kind attachment can double all his joys. With the wife of his bosom how dignified and happy the days of this virtuous husband? Her endearing converse soothes him in the hour of sorrow. Her active benevolence stimulates him to goodness. Her steady adherence compensates for a thousand desertions. Her unaffected piety gives religion a double charm. Her devotion, founded on reason, and glowing with a sense of the Divine mercy, conducts him, with unspeakable transport, to the footstool of his God.

Behold him the father of a numerous family! The morning rouses them from their slumbers; but the day does not steal upon them, and leave the mercies of the night unacknowledged. See the parent, and the priest of this little band, leading his household to the domestic altar. See the prostrate family offering the early, the daily tribute of gratitude and praise! How congenial to all our better feelings is such a scene? Who is there whose heart does not applaud it? How lovely

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the service? How becoming the homage? How rich the sacrifice? This is religion's fairest form. Fashion, interest, ostentation, a thousand paltry motives, may call us to the rites of public worship: But only a deep sense of duty and devotion, can assemble a private family, with regularity and fervour, to domestic prayer. At night the beautiful scene is repeated, and to the protection of the Universal Parent this household of order and piety is again committed.

Thus glide on the days of sunshine and peace; but how, it is asked, will this man of religion behave in a different scene? Let the afflictive hand of God be upon him; let ill success disconcert his affairs; let sickness emaciate his frame; and death stare him in the face—Will piety support? Will religion tranquillize his soul? Let us see. Suppose all this to have taken place. Suppose him stretched on the bed of pain; his body worn with disease; his countenance pale; his eyes sunk; and every pulse beating a surrender to the king of terrors, Let this happen in the prime of life;

life; when fond expectation had set before him years of usefulness and delight. His amiable wife, rich in all the virtues of a consort, a friend, a mother, and a christian, stands with an aching bosom at his pillow, and vainly strives to restrain the falling tear. The effort is too much, the streaming sorrow will have vent; the consolation she intended to impart, she stands in need of herself. Now it is that the efficacy of religion is manifest, and that the power of sincere piety triumphs. The "christian hero," on the bed of death, proves his title to the palm. With an eye that looks unutterable things, and a voice which agony and affection render scarcely audible, grasping hard the hand of the lovely mourner, he thus addresses her:

"Comfort of my days, and sharer of all my fortunes; weep not as if some impossible event had befallen you. The business of life is to prepare for such an hour. I trust the fear of God, has preserved us formerly; and the consolations of that recollection will not be wanting now. As for myself, my heart is at ease. It reposes



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on the compassion of its God. O death !  
to me thou hast no terrors. Thy final  
stroke is upon me, but I consider it only  
as a signal for my last earthly remove. A  
few steps more, and my pilgrimage is over.  
I shall have done with every thing below ;  
and shall have actually entered the celest-  
tial abodes. In those abodes, dear and  
amiable partner of my journey, our union  
shall e'er long be complete. In this world,  
we knew each other but in part ; our af-  
fection, tender as it has been, only began:  
in that sphere of true joy, unchangeable  
felicity, and increasing purity and perfec-  
tion, await us.—In the meantime, remem-  
ber, that though I die, our Heavenly Father  
lives. The widow and the fatherless  
are his peculiar care. In his protection,  
the assistance of a worm like myself will be  
wholly needless.—For these dear pledges  
of our affection, they are the strongest ar-  
guments I can offer, to reconcile you to  
life. Live, my best, my dearest friend, live,  
while the Father of all permits you, for  
our children. By your instructions inform  
them what virtue is, and by your example  
convince

convince them that virtue is practicable. Thus shall you finish a noble and useful race; and only a little while precede your children in the attainment of immortal joys." This, is *the death of the righteous*; Whose heart does not exclaim, "*let my last end be like his!*"

It is almost unnecessary to observe, that the attainment of such a character as this is worth every possible exertion. I have attempted to show how the principle by which it is guided—the fear of God will tranquillize the mind in the most trying situations of life. Where this is genuine, it will give us habitual cheerfulness; and recommend religion by exhibiting it in the most amiable and lovely colours. A rational piety, divested of affected gloom, and hypocritical grimace, will assist in every duty, and heighten every joy. It will render us good citizens, peaceable subjects, affectionate parents, dutiful children, kind relations, sincere friends, and honest men. It will teach us what is *the good and acceptable, and perfect will of God*. It will form us to a habit of entertaining just and honour-

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honourable notions of the Divine government. It will teach us to love the character, and venerate the precepts of the blessed Redeemer. It will kindle within us affectionate sentiments towards all mankind; and, finally, it will prepare us for an entrance into the heavenly paradise. There Jesus, *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, is preparing mansions of bliss for all his followers. There the virtuous and the good, of every age and place, will enjoy a perpetual spiritual communion with the wisest and best of Beings. There purity, intelligence, and peace, will eternally dwell, for God himself shall be ALL IN ALL!

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## SERMON XVI.

## HARVEST REFLECTIONS.

JEREMIAH VIII. 20.

*The harvest is past, the summer is ended,  
and we are not saved.*

THESE words occur in one of those SERM.  
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prophecies which were delivered in the reign of Josiah. That excellent prince had done all in his power to avert the just anger of God from his people. With the utmost solemnity he had restored the services of the Temple. Such a passover was kept, as we are informed, had not been known from the days of Samuel the prophet. Idols were destroyed throughout the whole country, and it is added, *All his days the people departed not from following the*

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*the Lord, the God of their fathers.* All this looked well, and it is with pain that we find it was all hollow and deceitful. Religion was in fashion at court; and it became the order of the day through all the land. A prodigious clamour was raised about the temple of the Lord. All the mummery of ceremonial devotion was played off with the most rigid formality. Even ministers of state, became zealous attendants upon religious exercises. Sacrifices crowded the altar: worshippers, in throngs, beset the gates of the temple; and from *Dan to Beersheba*, all was the show of religion.

The monarch was sincere; and charity hopes that not a few amongst the thousands of Judah were sincere also: but the best information assures us, that with respect to infinitely the majority of all ranks, it was a mere outside reformation. Like the Pharisees, in the time of our Lord; *as whited sepulchres, they appeared beautiful without; but within they were full of all uncleanness.* The face was made long, and the *phylactary* broad, but the heart was

was unchanged. Yesterday they bowed at the altar of Baal: to-day they are cringing in the temple of Jehovah: in both situations it is equally a farce they are playing. But however the wicked might deceive themselves or others, with all this hypocrisy, God was not deceived; and by the mouth of Jeremiah, he thus takes away the mask from their faces. Israel and Judah are compared to two sisters; and after reciting the destruction of Israel, it is added; *And yet for all this, her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but in falsehood, saith the Lord. For every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is gone unto covetousness: from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely; for they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace.*

Contemplating this awful state of his stupified and wicked countrymen, the Prophet, in the text, breaks out into a figurative but affectionate lamentation over them. *The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.* He surveys the



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the forbearance of God with the Jews under the emblem of a year; and as this forbearance had failed of its effect through the preceding stages: as the harvest was got in, and the summer concluded without a sincere reformation, he anticipates, in a variety of striking and tender passages, the stormy and destructive winter which was rapidly approaching.

In a national view, such a picture as this is, at all seasons, full of interesting instruction. The divine word is a glass which neither flatters nor distorts. It is a faithful mirror, and we ought frequently to place it before us. It will show us our true selves: and if, as a people, we should be found to resemble the Jews in the time of Josiah, repentance and shame should fill our hearts. From their example we learn that there may be great pretences to religion without the reality. That, sometimes, the example of a pious prince has no influence on the character of his subjects. These truths ought particularly to impress us; that sacrifices, and a strict observance of devotional ceremonies, are  
very

very compatible with the most deplorable wickedness of heart and life. That nothing but real, practical goodness can have any weight in the Divine estimation. *Cease to do evil, learn to do well.* This is the constant language of Him, who is addressing us as he did the Jews of old, *Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die!*

In further discoursing upon the text, I shall consider the words as applicable to every individual; and descriptive of the general nature of human life.

I. Human life, like every year of it, is in a state of constant progression. This thought naturally springs from the text, which mentions two periods of the year, and implies the rest. The flight of time is proverbially rapid. But, like the circulation of the blood in the body, while it flows without impediment, it is unfelt and unnoticed. In health, while the spirits are brisk, the limbs vigorous, and the mind at ease, time flits away upon downy pinions. Business or amusement supply a thousand occupations. Every moment is filled

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filled up, and days and weeks leave scarcely a trace of their existence. But let health be interrupted: let langour and pain visit the frame, and the motion of time is pungently felt. The moments are slow in their approach, and they pass by us upon leaden feet.

Such is the difference produced by the sensations we experience; but, independently of this, the march of time is constantly the same. Whether we are asleep or awake; idle or busy; well or ill; it never halts in its progress, it never treads back any of its steps. That we should improve this talent properly is of the utmost importance. We are very unlikely to do it, while all runs smoothly along, and we meet with no stops in our path. It is kind, therefore, in our Maker sometimes to check our speed. To give us an opportunity of asking ourselves where we are? What we have been doing, and what is likely to become of us whenever life may close? Every thing warns us that here there is no continuance for man. Every day has its hours; every year has its seasons;



seasons; and a moment's reflection will tell us, that the more of these we have witnessed, the fewer we *can* have to succeed. The grave exhibits a long, dreary winter, for all our earthly pursuits. Every bud is nipped, every flower of human joy withers in the chilling atmosphere of mortality's last abode. If we have no hope of hailing with delight the approach of an eternal spring; imagination cannot paint a gloomier picture than the grave. To this boundary, however, every step conducts us; and it is utterly impossible for any to tell when his last step will be taken. The time will come when we must all say; *The harvest is past, and the summer is ended!*

II. Human life, like the year, is full of changes. I do not refer to those regular, gradual alterations which are produced by the common growth of the body; or by the regular succession of the seasons. I allude to the sudden and unexpected vicissitudes we frequently witness. The brightest day is overcast, and terminated by a premature

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and

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and stormy night. The tempest which ushered in the morning has as unexpectedly rolled away, and there has been *a clear shining after the rain*. For longer seasons than usual, either fine or foul weather may continue. All is uncertain, and all is beyond our ability to regulate or controul.

In unison with this, is the varying state of human affairs. The lot of man is extremely different; and the same life is, generally, a chequered and party-coloured scene. To-day they are riding high on the wave of prosperity. To-morrow the faithless billow bursts, and they sink in the gulphs of distress. Now their path is strewn with roses. A multitude are ready to minister to their pleasures. Crowds seem proud and happy to walk beside them as companions and friends. In a little season every thing is changed; and they are groping alone, in a dark and solitary way. Then, if they have nothing to console them but the common friendship of the world, where is their comfort? If conscience reproaches, and they have no hope  
of

of the Divine approbation, how miserable must be their condition?

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Troubles, however, are not always punishments, or enemies. *All these things*, said Jacob, *are against me*, but the event proved that his fears were poor interpreters of the proceedings of Providence. The circumstances which at that moment filled his breast with anguish, were making way for all his future comfort. Thus it is, that the storms and trials of life are made to establish the faith, and purify the virtues of those who are exercised by them. God knows all things, and, doubtless, can see danger in many cases where we are sensible of none. Many a buffeted pilgrim has had reason to be thankful for the storms he has passed through. He has been driven into his own heart, and convinced that amidst many fair appearances, all was not right with God. His chaff has been winnowed away, and the pure grain separated and preserved.

Christians! do not always conclude when sorrows are your portion, that Heaven has forsaken you. In patience and meekness



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possess your souls. Let faith be called in to exercise. Let holy jealousy be awakened. Let double diligence be exerted, and then you may regard your disappointments and crosses as tokens of the Divine love. *All things shall work together for good, to them that love God.*

III. Life, upon the whole, like the years which compose it, is crowned with the Divine goodness. It is this which gives us existence; it is this which heals our diseases; forgives our transgressions, and supplies our wants. From every mouth this acknowledgment ought to ascend: *I am daily loaded with the Divine benefits.* Notwithstanding the hourly provocations of a world of sinners, yet the mercies of God are new every morning, and repeated every night. The sun rises from day to day, to proclaim the glory, and witness the munificence of heaven. Indeed with the sun himself there is no intermission. His blaze continues, from age to age, an uniform uninterrupted day. It is only to us that he appears to rise and set. When our  
portion

portion of the globe is turned from him, he is pouring day-light upon other millions of our race. He is witnessing the joys and sorrows, and rousing the activity of other climes.

Like the sun, the goodness of the Creator never stops. It circulates through the universe. It is an ocean forever flowing, and for ever full. The crimes or the calamities of man may sweep away the species. District after district may be laid waste: but the original command, *Increase and multiply*, has lost none of its energy. *One generation passeth away, but another cometh.* Like the waves of the ocean, as one breaks on the beach, another rushes forward, and no vacancy is visible. So in the vast army of human life; the ranks are mowed down one after another, but new combatants start forth, and every chasm is instantly filled.

The liberality and munificence of the Great Householder keep pace with the numbers and the wants of his family. Year after year the seasons revolve. In due succession the peculiar productions of each are brought forth. Summer is best fitted for the business of collection. The days

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are warm and long ; and then the treasures of the divine bounty are scattered with an unsparing hand. It is not a few penurious drops, it is an ocean of supply which rolls in upon the world. This year we are called upon to celebrate in anthems of joy the munificence of God. *The harvest is past*, and the arm which reaped it is glad to repose. *The summer is ended*, but as it went along, it witnessed for God that he had not forgotten to be gracious. Our earthly wants are provided for ; our spiritual supplies are continued ; and if *we are not finally saved*, it must be our own fault. Our fields have been fruitful, let not our hearts be barren. Our storehouses are full, let not our souls be empty. Our land has yielded its increase, let not our lives be fallow ground.

IV. Between the mode of providing for the body and the soul, there is a close analogy. Labour is the price man is to pay for his supplies. Neither mental nor bodily goods are to be procured without exertion. The ground must be manured  
and



and dressed. The seed must be prepared and laid in it. Time must be allowed for the process which nature requires. When this is completed, we may hope for the produce. The little blade will pierce the surface and bring forth the stalk, the ear, and the fruit.

In like manner the formation of the mind is a work of diligence, labour, and time. Instructions must be chosen with skill, and repeated with kindness and frequency. Again and again the precious seed must be dropped into the mental soil; and when the fruit begins to appear, unceasing attention must be given to the produce. The young buds must be fostered by the sun-shine of judicious praise. The shoots which are too rank and luxuriant, must be lopped off with the knife of faithful reproof and admonition. Proper seasons for the use of these different means must be watched for and improved; and, above all, in every stage, both of the natural and moral process, the blessing of God must be fervently and constantly solicited. Without this, the natural and spiritual husband-

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man will both labour in vain. *Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God only who can give the increase.*

Summer and autumn are the seasons to which the text principally leads us. They are both eminently marked by the Divine bounty; and both descriptive of our spiritual situation. Our soil is not more enriched with the bounties of nature, than our churches and our houses are filled with the means of grace. We are like trees planted in the gospel vineyard. Divine ordinances, like a salubrious air, shake, refresh, and strengthen our branches. The Scriptures are like a fine soil constantly lying about our roots, and sending the most nutritive juices through the veins of the moral plant. In a spiritual sense, we have enjoyed a long summer of ease and prosperity. Persecution has neither kindled its fires, nor laid its axe to the root of the tree. The means of improvement in holy lives, and in devout and heavenly affections and tempers, are abundantly granted. Our sabbaths return, and the doors of our respective religious houses thrown

thrown open, invite us to enter. Our teachers are not driven into corners. Whatever some individuals may wish, the magistrate no longer forbids our religious assemblies. In whatever way appears to us right, we may worship the God of our fathers. The oracles of heavenly truth are in our hands, and we may read and explain them in whatever way we please.

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Religion, it is true, is not countenanced by the practice of multitudes in higher life: but when was it that *many great or many noble were called*? Alas! the manners and pursuits of the fashionable world are, and it is to be feared, ever will be, unfriendly to a manly seriousness of spirit. But, brethren, it is to be hoped that our notions of godliness are formed upon better models. It is not, surely, among the profligate and gay, that we expect to find the consistent followers of Jesus. God forbid that the soft and relaxing season of summer should have totally unstrung the nerves of piety: or rendered us, like softened wax, capable of receiving any impression, but of retaining none. If this is  
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the case, fugitive, indeed, will be our goodness. *Unstable as water* our best resolutions. *Evanescent as a cloud* our firmest purposes. In the review of our conduct we shall be obliged to take up the melancholy exclamation in the text; *The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.* While others were working out their salvation, and storing up the honey of the divine favour, like idle drones, we have done nothing. Fluttering in the breeze, or basking in the sun, we have wasted life without one honourable exertion. What avails the summer? What boots the harvest to us? *He that watereth shall be watered again: but the slothful and wicked shall be destroyed, and that without remedy.*

V. As the harvest of the year, so the harvest of probation will surely come. Our Lord more than once compares the end of the world to this season. In explaining the parable of the *tares*, this is the language of Jesus: *The field is the world: the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but*

*but the tares are the children of the wicked one: the enemy that sowed them is the Devil: the harvest is the end of the world: and the reapers are the angels.* What a striking and simple view of things! The good and the bad, like wheat and tares, are blended in this state of trial. With an equally fair appearance, they flourish in the field of life. *Root up the tares*, says human ignorance and impatience. "No," says Divine Wisdom, "*let them grow together till the harvest.*" In rooting up the tares, the good grain will be more essentially injured, than in suffering them to ripen together." The time of separation is not yet, but it will certainly come. God is not unmindful of human characters. For wise purposes he has permitted evil to take root in the earth. It brings forth its thorns and briars; but he will never confound them with the good grain, or suffer them to choke and destroy it. The *harvest* is drawing on. A solemn and decisive season. The heavenly reapers will, comparatively, soon go forth, and divide for ever the tares from the wheat. The present  
life

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life is the only one in which saints and sinners can associate: but while there is an intercourse they may do good to each other. Saints may be rendered cautious; and sinners may be made holy. Let us see to it that this is the improvement we derive from the different characters which come in our way; they may all help us in forming our own.

In one particular, the parallel between the harvest of the year, and the harvest of life, fails. We know the common duration of summer, but we are ignorant of the exact measure of any particular life. The harvest may approach much sooner than we are aware. Let us take care that no time is wilfully lost, and then it can never approach too soon.

From this subject it is obvious to reflect,

1. How deplorable will be the condition of those, who at the end of their days are compelled to say, "*The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved?*"

All the seasons of improvement are lost. We neglected to sow, and we have no fields to reap. All behind us has been idleness,



idleness, profligacy, and sin: and all before us is the dreary frightful winter of the Divine indignation."

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Such facts as these take place, but who can arraign the justice of heaven? God compels no man to be a sinner. He neither wills nor abets the destruction of a single soul. Every sinner's conscience will acquit his Maker, and condemn himself. None will be able hereafter to say, "I had not sufficient grace to save me."

Sinners! reflect on this, and while the summer of life is passing, prepare for that harvest in which every refuge of lies shall be burnt up. In which the chaff shall be swept into outer darkness: and nothing but pure grain laid up in the storehouse of heaven.

2. With what unspeakable joy may such as can anticipate a happy harvest contemplate the exit of the summer of life. When their last sun sinks into the horizon, they know that it is only to rise to an eternal day. Their language is, "the harvest is coming, and our redemption draws nigh. A few more struggles, and struggles are over

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over for ever. A few more glimpses of earth, and the vision of heaven opens. *Mortality is swallowed up of life.* Hail, ye pure and blessed abodes! Hail, ye lovely celestial companions! Hail, ye unutterable, never-withering joys! Our feet are stumbling upon the dark mountains. For a little while we must disappear: but we shall not be lost. *We know that our Redeemer liveth, that he is able to keep us safe, and to present us spotless before the presence of his Father's glory.* Every conflict is over. We enter the confines of eternal day. *Glory to God in the highest! The summer is ended, the harvest is past, and we are for ever saved."*

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

ON MODERATION.

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PHILIPPIANS IV. 5.

*Let your MODERATION be known unto  
all men.*

THIS exhortation, simple as it may appear at first, will be found to contain one of the most extensive and useful directions that ever was given to the world. It is found in the close of Paul's letter to the christians at Philippi; and before I enter directly upon the consideration of it, I shall make a general remark upon that circumstance. The concluding parts of the epistles, are invaluable portions of the Apostolic writings. They are confined to no age or country. They are so plain as scarcely to admit of misinterpretation: They

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They are very few of them blended with the peculiar circumstances of the times or churches to which they were addressed. They contain rules of life which, if honestly adhered to, will contribute to our happiness for both worlds. It is greatly to be wished that these easy, and truly important passages in the sacred books, were more frequently studied. Instead of filling our heads with a crowd of curious, but unprofitable and even impertinent notions: instead of perplexing us with disputes which the human understanding can never finally adjust: these would direct us to what is of infinite moment—the discipline of our passions, and the regulation of our lives. They would lead us to look into our hearts, and place before us a mirror which would neither flatter our vices, nor magnify our virtues. They would not suffer us to think we had *already attained, or were already perfect*. They would be a means, by shewing us how far we fall short of practical perfection, of keeping us humble, cautious, and safe.

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I now come particularly to consider the exhortation in the text—*Let your moderation be known unto all men.* SERM.
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Moderation will be of the highest advantage in the culture of our own minds; and in our social and religious intercourse with mankind. These are the *three* views in which I propose to point out the excellence of the Apostle's advice.

I. With respect to ourselves. Moderation in all our pursuits and expectations will enable us to make the most of our enjoyments; and expose us to the least danger of losing them. Except the mind is balanced and serene, no pleasure can be relished. But how is this serenity to be obtained? Surely, not by fixing the standard of happiness so high that it is scarcely possible to reach it. If we are determined that nothing short of such or such degrees of wealth, rank or power, shall satisfy us, we are very unlikely to be happy, even if we should attain them. It is plain we have mistaken the nature of our object; and have looked for that in the materials of happiness, which is to be found chiefly

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in the right application of them. We have forgotten the mind, and have rested upon mere outward things.

Not to expect more from the things of mortality than they are capable of bestowing, will be our best security against disappointment, both in pursuit and possession. We are as often deceived in one as the other. Many of those gay phantoms which we have pursued with such disproportioned ardour, have proved in possession bursting bubbles. Again and again the experiment has been repeated; and though the success has been similar, our infatuation has been but little diminished. Thus we have almost all our lives been the sport of hopes unreasonably elevated; and disappointments to which, chiefly, our own inattention has rendered us vulnerable.

Whatever situation of life shall be allotted us, a spirit of moderation will best prepare us for it. Whether the sun of prosperity is gilding our path, or the storm of adversity beating on our head, it will be equally advantageous. Assisted by this tranquillizing temper, in the one case we shall rejoice with trembling; and in the other,

other, submit with meekness. Our triumph will be decent, and our resignation entire. The appointments of a wise and gracious Providence will be traced with gratitude. We shall perceive that mercy and truth are following us all our days. Composure of spirit will double every delight. Alive to every sensation of virtue, decorum, and innocent gaiety, we shall feel a glow of soul which will give a spirit to every joy. Keeping our appetites in due subordination, and holding the reins of passion with a steady hand, we shall use the world without abusing it. With thankfulness we shall partake of the rich feast which the bounty of Heaven has provided. By a vigilant guard upon ourselves, we shall avoid self reproach, and escape the bitter sensations of unavailing remorse. Even disappointment will seldom take place where we are really moderate in our desires and pursuits.

II. No man lives to himself. The society of which we are members has a multitude of claims upon us. These claims we are called upon by our wants, by an

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attention to our happiness, and by the command of God to fulfil. In this intercourse with mankind, the constant exercise of a spirit of gentleness and moderation will be infinitely serviceable. In domestic life, it will lead us to throw a veil over the temporary, or even the permanent imperfections of those who are, upon the whole, amiable and useful characters. We shall be induced to make an allowance for hastiness of temper, for an unguarded expression, for an unkind look, and for a multitude of those little infelicities of disposition, which frequently attach to the excellent of the earth. By this spirit of moderation, we shall closely try our own conduct; and not ungenerously charge upon our companions, the faults which belong to ourselves.

As superiors, this equitable spirit will lead us to reflect, that we might have been placed in the subordinate ranks. Instead of commanding, it might have been our province to obey. Feeling, in this ideal change of circumstances, what we should have expected, we shall treat our dependants with gentleness and justice. We shall
command

command without pride or harshness. Reproof will be administered only when it is necessary; and then it will be given in such a manner as to manifest, that it is with the crime, and not the criminal, we are angry. As inferiors, we shall consider ourselves bound to discharge honestly and conscientiously the duties of our stations. Such a moderate spirit will teach us properly to feel our circumstances; and not expect a behaviour from those who are placed above us to which we are not entitled. It will teach us justly to estimate our services, and not permit us to suppose that we can never be sufficiently rewarded for what we do. In short, in all cases, a fair and candid estimation of ourselves; leaning rather to humility than pride, will lay the firmest basis for that contentment of spirit which is the richest of earthly treasures.

This moderate and equitable temper will teach us not to make excessive demands upon the time, the patience, or the pleasures of those with whom we are upon an equal footing in the world. The *time* of a christian is the richest jewel he possesses.

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Rob him of this, and you rob him of what can never be repayed. Remember, also, that you rob yourselves, and there will a time come, in which you must give an account of this double theft. Were this thought properly weighed, the empty routine of formal and thoughtless visits would in a great degree cease. So many of the few days which make up the life of man, would never be murdered at the card-table, the assembly, and the theatre. At present one would think the nature of things was changed! that eternity was a moment, and time an endless duration!

The highest authority has informed us, that *offences will come*. Our own experience so frequently confirms this truth, that without great care our minds are apt to become sour and inexorable. The imagination, rendered gloomy by repeated instances of baseness and ingratitude, paints with too dark a pencil. We are likely, especially as we advance in life, to view mankind through too thick a medium. Against this distressing perversion of mind, moderation will happily operate. It will suggest that a character, however blackened by

by misrepresentation, may have something to be said in its favour. It will tell us, that till we hear this, it is not merely prudence but duty to suspend our judgment. Perhaps no character in the world was ever completely vicious. Many who have been thrown into a shade, by an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances, have possessed virtues of which their triumphant enemies were destitute. Moderation will incline us to patience. We shall condemn no one unheard. Before we pass sentence, we shall fully investigate the case. No part of the evidence will be neglected. Every thing will be weighed in impartial scales. True moderation will not stop even here. If compelled to condemn, it will not insult or forsake. Having convicted, it will lead us to pity. Having fixed the charge, it will induce us to invite and encourage repentance. How many offenders, is there not reason to believe, would stop at the commission of the first crime, if penitence were encouraged by protection. Mere forgiveness, in this case, is not enough, you must countenance them afterwards, you must give them an opportunity,

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tunity, under your own wing, of retrieving and establishing their character. It is only such a conduct that will render forgiveness a blessing. Return an acquitted criminal into society; however penitent he may be, what is he to do? Without a character, where can he get his bread? And except some one will have magnanimity enough to take him up, where can a character be obtained? An offender had better be cut off at once, than be tempted, by forgiveness, and universal desertion, to the perpetration of greater crimes.

In society, *political* interests and opinions will often occupy our minds, and not unfrequently become the theme of conversation.—On such occasions let us be particularly careful to manifest moderation, both of temper and of language—on scarcely any one subject are we less entitled to be positive than on the embarrassing and complex one of politics. No human work is perfect, and considering the multifarious nature of its objects, it is, perhaps, matter of little surprise that the science of human government is in general so defective. None but those who are actually engaged in

in conducting its higher operations, can be aware of the difficulties with which it is attended; and considering how many turbulent passions are to be regulated, and how many jarring interests are to be reconciled in the vast system of national concerns, a good mind will be disposed to pity, rather than to envy or condemn, the greater part of the rulers of mankind. Let us, my brethren, frequently turn our eyes from feeble, short-sighted men, to that Almighty Ruler who sits at the helm of the universe, and who, from what seems to us almost a chaos, is constantly educing order, virtue, and happiness. This will elevate and fortify our minds; render us easy as to the final issue of things; and dispose us, upon all occasions, to think and speak of our fellow mortals with candour, impartiality, and moderation.

III. In our religious concerns a spirit of moderation is of incalculable advantage. It will prevent our becoming the violent partizans of this or the other religious sect. In the controversies which have divided the

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the christian world, we shall not fiercely engage. In the exercise of moderation we shall discern the true nature of religion. We shall imbibe the spirit of our Lord. We shall be humble with respect to ourselves, and charitable to those who differ from us.

A spirit of moderation will not prevent men of equal talents, and equal virtues, from embracing different sides in a controversy; or from joining very opposite standards in a theological dispute; but it will teach them not to think the worse of each other for so doing. It may not reduce the number of parties, but it will extinguish the bitterness of a party spirit.

That truth for which all profess to be seeking, appears to me, in religious matters, as in most other cases, to lie in the middle: and of this I am confident, that wherever it lies, it has nothing to do with that bitter spirit which has so frequently been manifested by its professed adherents. We all know what wretched controversies have sprung up, like weeds, in the christian church. We are all witnesses of the melancholy

lancholy schisms which have been made in that bond of unity and peace with which our master girded his system. Piety weeps at the blindness and bigotry of her professed votaries; and humanity shudders at the bloody rage of contending denominations. Let us drop a tear on the madness of mankind; and draw the curtain of oblivion across the hideous scene! Let us thank God that our lot is cast in better times, and that the flames of religious persecution are quenched. While the sword of the civil magistrate sleeps, all parties may smile at the anathemas of theological pride and dogmatism.

Upon a review of those disputes, which for centuries have divided the followers of Jesus, what do we behold? A multitude of venerable, learned, and pious names, on every side of the question. What does this inculcate? Clearly, the necessity of that moderation for which I am pleading. Surely if any thing is certain it is this, that positivity and intolerance are inconsistent not only with moderation and love, but with common decency. It is, plainly, the duty of all to pronounce with caution; to bear

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bear with others; to pray for the increasing influence of candour and peace, and, daily to search the scriptures as the fountain of all truth. It is, also, of infinite importance to keep as clear from extremes in practice as we do in opinion. While we do not follow the melancholy enthusiast into those paths which make religion morose, let us be extremely careful not to plunge into all the follies and vices of a licentious age. This happy medium, to have our conversation in the world as in the sight of God, is the whole of practical religion. Without this the best adjusted system, and the clearest notions of speculative truth, are of no value. Unaccompanied with correspondent actions, they will only overwhelm us with confusion at the tribunal of God.

This moderate and amiable spirit will keep us humble and diligent. Restrained within due bounds, a sense of our own imperfections will do us good. It will preserve our present virtue, and be a spur to further attainments. It will teach us the necessity of watchfulness and circumspection. It will assist us in estimating our own characters. It will, also, prevent us from

from censuring the religious principles and motives of those who differ from us. We shall not condemn them for not seeing with our eyes. We shall not think the worse of their morals, merely because they cannot square their faith according to our notions. This temper will teach us to revere in others, what we esteem sacred and important in ourselves. We shall be ready to give what we demand; full liberty to think and speak upon religious matters, as truth and soberness require. In fine, could we uniformly conduct ourselves by the golden rule in the text, harmony and love would everywhere prevail. We should reverence the rights of conscience. We should make every reasonable allowance for the failings and prejudices of our fellow-creatures; and for ourselves, walk humbly in the sight of God.

I shall close with a brief illustration of a general remark; that this spirit of moderation will prevent our *virtues* from running to excess. All our vices are virtues abused. This sole consideration will furnish arguments in favour of this valuable temper, which neither sophistry can undermine, nor experience

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experience contradict. Look at the miser! whose parsimony will scarcely allow him bread: within proper limits, his conduct had been laudable œconomy. Mark the contrary character! A generous spirit lies at the foundation of ruinous extravagance. Unchecked by prudence, unrestrained by moderation, liberality degenerates into thoughtless profusion. See an unhappy wretch, whose bosom rankles with envy, and who, to injure a rival, can stoop to the basest measures! A thirst for honourable praise, carried beyond the controul of reason, is really the origin of that humiliating spectacle. Behold a form arrayed in the garb of religion! A cross is portrayed on his breast; a Bible is hung at his girdle; he calls himself a disciple of the Prince of Peace: but the fury of a demon burns in his eye; the impious anathema vibrates on his tongue; the dagger of death arms his frantic hand. A zeal for God, but tempered with no humanity, and guided by no information, has converted the ardor of piety, into the ferocity of the principled bigot.

Once more, mark yonder lovely form!
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Her arms folded on her bosom; her wan countenance furrowed with grief; her streaming eye fixed on the earth: she sees not the sun; she hears not the music of the groves; she heeds not the accents of friendship and affection; she shuns every human abode; she steals into the gloomy cavern, and draws with the pencil of despair, the picture of the God of heaven. Gentle sufferer! what a Moloch thou hast delineated! How piteous thy delusion! What a happy creature hadst thou been, if the deep veneration which saddens thy bosom, had been relieved by juster notions. As it is, piety itself is the foundation of wretchedness.

Let these few instances justify the remark, that virtue, carried to excess, degenerates into vice. Let us learn the necessity of moderation, even in our noblest pursuits. Let us never forget the real dignity of man, nor overlook the deep ingratitude of vice. We can be wicked only by a perversion of those principles which were given us as the means of happiness.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

ON EARLY RELIGION.

Addressed particularly to Young Persons.

PROVERBS IV. 9.

She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver unto thee.

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BY looking back to the seventh verse of this chapter, we shall discover who it is of whom the wise man is speaking. *Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding.* It is very clear that by wisdom, Solomon principally intends religion. A proof of this will be found in the seventh verse of the first chapter of this book :

book: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning, or the principal part, of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom, and instruction.*

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It has been a very unfortunate, and a very common mistake, that to be really religious, it was necessary to be sour and morose. This error has flowed from two grand sources: the notions which have been entertained of God, and the gloomy, forbidding manners of some religious characters.

A very different representation of things is, however, frequently given. Many arguments have been often produced to show that amidst all the majesty, and wisdom of the Divine Being, goodness is his predominant and darling attribute. *He hateth nothing which he hath made. He is good; and doeth good continually. With Him is no respect of persons. The same Lord over all, is merciful unto all who call upon him. The Lord loveth righteousness, and judgment; and the earth is full of his goodness.*

That some men of real goodness have been rigid in their sentiments, and austere

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in their manners, is admitted: but it was not their religion which made them so. The unhappy tempers which they have manifested, are ascribable to other causes. All that can be inferred from such cases is, that religious principles have not had all the influence upon them which they ought. They have made them just and upright; but they have been insufficient to correct some natural harshness of disposition; they have failed of their effect in circumstances of external distress, and embarrassment. Such persons may be real, but they are not ornamental christians. Their hearts have been kept, upon the whole right; but they have seen many objects through an unfavourable medium. Prejudice and impatience have been suffered to warp their minds. While their attention has been directed to secure *the root of the matter*; the fruits and flowers, which would have adorned the tree of piety, have been overlooked and neglected.

In all cases, if we would gain a *real* knowledge of things, we must examine for ourselves.

ourselves. If I were about to purchase an estate, I should not trust to the report of other people. I should go to the place where it lay; I should walk deliberately over it. I should examine its several parts; and in those points in which I was ignorant myself, call in the judgment and advice of others. If I wished to become acquainted with a picture of which I had heard various accounts, I should not chuse to form an opinion of it merely from the report of those who had seen it. I should not think, even myself, justified in pronouncing upon it, unless I had seen it in various positions; taken notice how it was affected by different lights; if necessary, made use of glasses; and, in short, taken every proper step to enable me to form a fair opinion.

If I wished for information upon any particular art or science, I should converse, often, with those who were adepts in it; and I should read, with the closest attention, the books in which it was unfolded and explained.

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Now, my dear young friends, this is the mode in which I would have you treat religion. Be not blindly guided by the accounts of other people. Pay no regard to the exclamations you may hear around you; *lo, here is Christ, or lo, there.* Take up the Bible for yourselves. Read it, as you would a *letter* which came to you from a wise and affectionate friend in a distant country. Examine it, as you would an *act* of the supreme authority of the country in which you live; and which is framed for the express purpose of regulating your conduct. Resolve to abide by its directions as you would by the *prescription* of a physician, which you believed to be the only means of recovering you from a deadly distemper. In all these lights the Bible ought to be considered. It is the declared *word* of God; and God is our best *friend*, our ablest *physician*, and our *Supreme Governor*. Religion is the main subject which the Word of God undertakes to describe and enforce. That Word is scrupulously accurate; and unchangeably

ably true. It follows, that whatever representations of religion are found there, may be relied upon as just.

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Solomon, in the passage with which the text is connected, has drawn a very beautiful picture of religious wisdom, its advantages and honours. Solomon, was a rich and powerful eastern prince, and, therefore, it is natural that his images should be taken from the objects presented by a magnificent and luxurious court. Precious stones, crowns, and chains of gold; beautiful trees, springing fountains, plentiful feasts, and a multitude of similar spectacles, were always before him. The perfumes of Arabia breathed upon every path which he trod. The looms of Persia, hung his palaces and pavilions with filken drapery. Every fruit and flower which the odoriferous east could produce, was collected in his spacious gardens; and the distant regions of Hindostan poured their rare and various treasures into the court and dominions of the son of David. Thus circumstanced, the images which abound in the writings of this royal poet, appear no

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longer extravagant. They are the natural result of his situation.

In the passage now under consideration, Wisdom, or Religion, is represented as a beautiful Queen, placing on the head of some favoured votary a crown, and adorning him with other valuable and splendid ornaments. She is described as communicating much more than these external decorations. True understanding, which will preserve from mistake and danger; which will guide all our steps, and bring us to substantial and durable honour, is particularly numbered amongst her gifts. Is not this an engaging view of religious wisdom? Happiness is the grand, the universal pursuit of man. If religion will give happiness, will you not be glad to be religious? Permit me to offer you some reasons to prove, that happiness and religion are certainly connected.

I. Safety, which lies at the foundation of felicity, is the consequence of religious wisdom. *For sake her not, and she shall PRESERVE thee: love her, and she shall*

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KEEP *thee*. You need not be told that this is a world of temptation and danger. But it is often necessary to remind you of the fact. There is nothing which, in youth, we are so apt to forget as cautions against sin. We step into the world with our sensibilities all alive. We have frequently heard that it is a perilous path we are about to enter, but, at first, we see few, or none of its dangers. We have experienced no severe attack, and we cannot be persuaded that there is much real peril. "Age has made our fathers suspicious. Give mankind a little more credit, and they would not prove so selfish and base as they have been represented. We shall learn wisdom by the mistakes of others. To be always wretched for fear of doing wrong, is itself a deviation from right. Happiness and jealousy cannot dwell together." By these, and similar specious, but empty arguments, we are induced to walk on with less and less circumspection, till our own failure confirms the lessons we have ventured to despise. All we can now do is to make as

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quick, and as decent a retreat as possible. Happy for us, if a decent retreat be in our power!

The grand error was, that if we set out together, we soon parted with religious wisdom. Had she been our companion we should have been upon our guard. Her's is a faithful representation of things. Had we listened to her, we should not have supposed that the cautions we had received were unnecessary. We should not, in the folly of our hearts, have trusted to a strength which had never been tried. *He that walketh cautiously, walketh surely.* No one can do this, but he who has wisdom and faith enough to distrust himself, and look up to God for support and direction. *Wherewith, says the Psalmist, shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto, according to thy word.* If we forsake religion, we must do it at our peril. If we prize it as our chief good, it will encrease in our estimation day by day, In temptation it will defend. In prosperity it will refine, and govern our joy; and in adversity it will soothe the bitterest distress,

*tress. Them that honour me, I will honour :  
but they that despise me, shall be lightly  
esteemed.*

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II. Peace of mind is the consequence of religious wisdom. In seasons of health and ease, it is probable, we are not sensible of the value of this blessing. A total indifference to all future prospects, supplies the place of that rational and manly serenity which a well-grounded persuasion of an interest in the Divine favour can alone impart. But what a miserable foundation for comfort? The moment serious thought is exercised: the instant the mind asks the question, What will become of me hereafter? the spell is dissolved. The fairy scenes with which the imagination has been deluded, vanish at once. We are wandering in a pathless desert. Terror and alarm, like savages of the waste, beset us on every side. We look backward, but we can see nothing to cheer our spirits. Time wasted; opportunities of doing, and getting good, lost; talents prostituted in the service of sin; a large and important portion of our lives thrown away. We look forward, but all

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all is perplexity and dismay. What is before us we cannot tell; but, upon one subject fearful anticipations hang. "What account shall I give to my Maker of my conduct? I was placed upon earth to get ready for heaven; and I have scarcely bestowed a thought upon it. I should have subdued my passions; and my passions have subdued me. I am the slave of sin, when I ought to have been the freeman of Jesus. I am afraid to examine my condition, and if I do not, I am lost for ever. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this mental death?*"

I hope, my young friends, you will never experience all the bitterness of this representation: but nothing but true religious wisdom, can shield you from it. *The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest*: but the virtuous are like a broad majestic lake, when no agitation interrupts the smoothness of its surface. A humble hope that our sins will be blotted out: an honest consciousness that we wish, and strive to secure the Divine approbation, are the only grounds of solid satisfaction.



faction. *Great peace have they that love the divine law, and nothing shall offend them.* SERM. XVIII.

III. The most glorious and delightful prospects are communicated by religion. *She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory shall she deliver unto thee.* Religion, when it occupies as it ought, the principal place in the heart, will fill our minds with a delightful sense of the Divine grace or favour. This, rendering us happy in ourselves, will make our behaviour to others truly amiable and lovely. It will give a *gracefulness* to all our actions. We shall be *ornamental* disciples. We shall not only do good, but we shall do it in an engaging and winning manner. *Our light will shine in the world; and others, seeing our good works, will glorify our Father who is in heaven.* Blessing others, we shall bless ourselves.

This temporal felicity is but a foretaste, a very small part of that joy which religion sets before us. *A crown of glory, says the text, shall she deliver unto thee.* What-  
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ever might be the precise meaning of Solomon, a christian cannot hesitate a moment as to the full import of such an expression. *A crown of glory which fadeth not away*, is an image familiar to his mind. In the sacred moments of devout contemplation he realizes the prospects of the eternal world. An angel seems to lay hold of his hand, and raise him even to heaven. Thus elevated, he looks in at the celestial gates, and in spirit, is an eye witness to the glories of a heavenly crown. He sees the blessed inhabitants in all their beautiful and splendid array. The golden harps sound in his ears. The snow-white robes; and the never-withering palms, bless his eyes. He has caught a glimpse of the foot of the Divine throne; and he has seen the adoring immortals bending around it. At such seasons, Faith and Hope are in lively exercise. They convince him that a portion of these felicities belong to him. A Creator's love, and a Saviour's intercession, have insured this; and, with a transport, known only to himself, he cries out, *Whom have I in heaven*
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but Thee! This tenement of clay must fall: flesh and heart must fail me; but *God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

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These, my dear young friends, are a few of the things which religion can give you. Safety in temptation: peace of conscience: and the prospect of eternal, unutterable joy. Are these things which should make you melancholy? Will the hope of Heaven damp the virtuous delights of earth? No, my beloved, you will taste them with a double relish.

If religion, then, will sanctify all our earthly blessings; support us in the dark valley of affliction; make us patient under sufferings; and calm even in the prospect of dissolution; is it possible you can be religious too soon? Listen to me, I beseech you, while by some plain arguments I endeavour to persuade you to *early* piety. May the blessing of HIM who beholds with peculiar approbation a young worshipper, follow what will be said.

1. Early piety is highly acceptable to God. If one part of our time be more precious

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precious than another, it is but just that it should be dedicated to the honour and service of that Being from whom we have received the whole. The morning is esteemed the best part of the day. It is, certainly, that, in which the spirits, the judgment, and the strength, of an healthy regular man will be the most vigorous. In that mild and lovely season, instruction will make the most favourable impression. Our minds will be easily led into the service of HIM, whom we shall regard as our wisest, most powerful, and most affectionate friend. A reverence for God will sink deep into the tender mind. A firm belief that his holy eyes are constantly upon us, will greatly assist in the discipline of virtue. If we begin early we shall have little or nothing to undo. Bad example will have had little time to vitiate the heart. If useful and good seeds are sown at first, there will be no room for poisonous and destructive plants.

To be set right at the beginning of our course, is a happiness we cannot too highly value: it sweetens every labour, and renders

ders easier every future step. Dr. WATTS has a beautiful thought upon this subject, which, I trust, is familiar to most of your minds:

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“ A flower when offered in the bud
Is no vain sacrifice !”

The great God has expressly declared his approbation of such sacrifices. *I love them that love me ; and those that seek me EARLY shall find me.* Of a young man, who had kept the divine commandments it is said, that *Jesus loved him.* We cannot wonder at this. All amiable and holy himself, he must necessarily love early goodness. His approbation, also, could not be misplaced, for in him dwelt all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

2. Early goodness will lay the best foundation for stability of character. Nothing great can be effected without long perseverance. Virtue is a noble, simple, steady principle. Vice is base, complicated, and uncertain. If, in early years, we live totally at random, and are good or bad just as our companions and situations

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tions vary, it is absurd to expect, in middle life, maturity in goodness. If we drag on existence to old age, dishonourable trifling will make us despicable; or fruitless remorse, unhappy. The power of habit is a part of the history of man, of which we cannot be ignorant. If we doubt it, a thousand examples are at hand to correct our scepticism. We shall soon be obliged to confess that only a virtuous youth can lead to useful manhood, and afford us the prospect of a calm and dignified old age.

That goodness which will become a powerful principle of action, cannot be formed in a moment; or be the result of a few feeble, broken, and distant efforts. It must arise from a steady discipline of the moral powers; it must be founded in a sense of our own proneness to sin: it must be strengthened by daily exercise: it must be aided by devotion and prayer: and it must be carried to perfection by an humble dependence upon Divine Grace. *Woe unto them that sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag: the holy one of Israel shall blow upon them, and they*



*they shall wither ; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall bring forth fruit, even in old age, and the glory of the Lord their God shall be upon them.*

3. Early piety will give us the best title to the *consolations* of religion, both in the progress and at the close of life. To begin well is a matter of great importance. The highest authority has declared, that *godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.* Religion will lead us to a proper and abiding sense of the Divine government. It will show us that we are like soldiers placed on a certain post ; and like servants who have an appointed task to perform. Of this, we cannot be convinced too soon. There cannot be a greater enemy to human virtue than idleness. Man cannot be altogether unemployed. If he is not doing good, evil will be present with him. As, therefore, we must be active, or miserable, of what vast importance is it, that our activity should be properly directed !

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Sweet is the repose of innocence and labour. That man may lie down with a light heart who has been spending the day with God, in the exercise of his proper and virtuous business. When afflictions and disappointments overtake him, he is not utterly cast down. He knows he is in a changing world; and he does not expect that the gales will always blow from the prosperous point of the compass. His joy is, that his *best* treasures are not on earth. He is glad to work in the sun-shine if he can; but he does not suppose that he is authorized to quit the field, whenever the wind blows roughly, or the rains descend. He is thankful for earthly refreshments, but he well knows that earth is not his rest. Here he has no abiding tabernacle, but he looks forward to a citizenship in heaven. He anticipates future bliss; and already seems to repose in a mansion of that blessed abode, *whose builder and maker is God.*

In life, how broken will be the comfort, and, in death, how full of uncertainty and alarm, the prospects of the man who had  
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no fixed religious character: who was good only by fits and starts. On the contrary, in all circumstances, how dignified and happy is the man of early and persevering goodness! He entered the path of piety in the morning of his days, and, like the sun in the firmament, he holds on his way. Occasional clouds have obscured his lustre, but they have not stopped his course. Can we see such a character, and forget the words of the Psalmist? *Mark the perfect man; and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

Will religion, my dear young readers, be thus beneficial? Will *early religion* especially, lay such a broad foundation for honour and comfort; then, THIS DAY, if you have not done it before, commence its faithful disciples. Are comfort in this world, and eternal felicity in the world to come, promised as your reward? Can you desire greater incitements? Can it, possibly, be too soon for you to become candidates for such a glorious prize? Suffer me also to remind you, that it is not *merely a loss* that you will sustain. Heaven is not to



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be rejected with impunity. If you will not be happy, you must be dreadfully miserable. *God will not be mocked.* He offers you glory and peace, but if you despise his grace, you must endure his righteous indignation. Life was given for activity and improvement: if, at its close, you are found idle and sinful, the day of judgment will show that *the wages of sin is death.*

Finally, remember, that your life is extremely precarious. Multitudes, young and healthy as you are now, are daily swept into the grave. *What is your life? It is a vapour, which continueth for a little while, and then vanisheth away.* At present you are fair trees in the garden of life. Perhaps it may be said with respect to you, *Lord! let them stand for this year also.* God grant that if it be so; at the close of the year it may be found, that you have been *taking root downwards, and bearing fruit upwards.* May your fruit be unto holiness, and your end, life everlasting. AMEN.

SERMON

SERMON XIX.

ON PROPER BEHAVIOUR UNDER  
AFFLICTION.

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PSALM XXXIX. 9.

*I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because  
thou didst it.*

THESE words admirably describe the temper of mind with which a pious and good man will meet the afflictive dispensations of life. David was the author of this Psalm, and it was evidently written under the pressure of some deep distress. It breathes, throughout, the language of a virtuous and religious spirit struggling with its sorrows, and looking round for support and consolation.

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In endeavouring to improve this passage, I shall *First*, consider the Psalmist's behavi-

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our; *Secondly*, the reason he assigns for it; and *Thirdly* show, by way of application, when afflictions have their proper influence upon us.

I. The behaviour of the Psalmist appears to have been quiet and submissive. *I was dumb; I opened not my mouth.* In his sorrowful circumstances, whatever they were, his deportment was grave, and manly. He did not break out into the clamorous language of unbridled grief. He did not frame invectives against the wisdom, the justice, or the goodness of his Maker. Because he was deprived of his comforts, or smitten with disease, he did not rashly reproach the Almighty. He was not transported into any indecent reflections upon the divine appointments. He did not suppose that the world was a *chaos*, because he was in trouble. He did not appear to think himself wronged, because he was stripped of some of his comforts. He bowed with submission to the decrees of heaven, and did not attempt to scrutinize,



scrutinize, much less to condemn, the proceedings of the Most High.

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It is manifest that the Royal Sufferer was aware of the weakness of human nature. He was sensible how prone we are, in cases of affliction, to exceed, either in the quality or quantity of our complaints. The thought with which the Psalm begins is a proof of this fact. He declares that he would set *a bridle* upon his lips; and suggests, by pointing out the time when he would be thus particularly careful, a reason for his conduct, and a proof of his piety, *when the wicked is before me*. “While in the company of sinners, especially, I will give no room, by my behaviour, for reflections upon the Divine character. I will never shake the credit of religion by showing, that when it ought most strongly to operate, it has no influence upon me. At such seasons I will be doubly vigilant, and give *no occasion to the enemy to blaspheme*.”

Thus did the son of Jesse, who, though by no means sinless, was, upon the whole, a great character, demean himself in mo-

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ments of affliction. His *heart was hot within* him, but he held his peace from the least accusation of the Divine goodness. He suffered not a despairing expression to drop from his tongue. When he spoke, it was not to murmur: it was to emit the piety of prayer; and breathe the confidence of hope. *Lord! what wait I for? earth is vanity; man is mortal; and mine age is as nothing.* I quit every thing below, and fix my hopes upon thee! *I was dumb; I opened not my mouth.* Expressive dumbness! eloquent silence! a thousand words could not have taught us half so much submission.

This brings me,

II. To consider the reason which David gives for this acquiescence;—*because THOU didst it.*

In this expression, the Psalmist, evidently, has an eye to all the attributes of the Divine Being. He views the relations in which the Almighty stands to his creatures; and combining all these, he infers, in this comprehensive phrase, the propriety,

priety, and the necessity of entire submission. *I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because THOU didst it.*

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Submission to afflictive dispensations is a duty, because they are the appointments of a sovereign, wise, good, and covenant God.

1. God is the absolute sovereign of the universe; and he has a *right* to do what he pleases with his creatures. The eternal JEHOVAH is amenable to no human tribunal. His authority admits of no limitation. He gives, and he takes away. He bestows life, or seals us in the chambers of the grave. He prolongs, or shortens, our mortal career. He bids our eyes overflow with tears, or puts into our hands the cup of joy. He commissions disease and pain to attack our frame; or orders the ministers of his Providence to ward them off. He furnishes companions for our journey; or *puts lover and friend far from us*. He surrounds us with children; or withholds them from our wishes. They are granted to our prayers, and torn from our embrace. He heaps upon



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upon us riches; or bids them wing their way, *like an eagle*, from our grasp. He illuminates our tabernacle; or covers us with clouds and thick darkness. He raises us to the summit of worldly greatness; or sinks us into the valley of humiliation. In fine, *he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth: there is none that can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?* He is, in the strictest and highest sense, *the blessed and the only potentate. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.* The world was produced, and is dependent upon his will; and it is the dictate of reason, that, that world should be at his disposal.

Recognising all this, the pious child of affliction will say: "My father! *thy will be done.* Thou see'st fit to afflict me, and I dare not complain. I owe my very being to thee. Thou hast made me what I am. Thou only hast given me all that I possess. I can rest my claim to my enjoyments upon nothing but the free gift of thy

thy bounty : and if that power which bestowed, sees fit to suspend, or withdraw them, I have no *right* to murmur. No injury has been done, and no resentment ought to be felt."

2. Submission is a duty, because affliction is the appointment of the only WISE and GOOD God. Wisdom and goodness direct all the operations of Divine power; and prevent the possibility of charging God with a misapplication or abuse of irresistible strength. *He is wise in heart, and mighty in counsel.* His infinite wisdom framed that wonderful plan of existence, government, and redemption, which the world still exhibits. Into this plan, the calamities of nations, and the distresses of individuals, deeply enter. The salutary effects of pain and trouble have often been evinced. Pain is corrective, and upon this principle it is, that we account for the admission of natural and moral evil into the dominion of the most powerful, the most wise, and the most benevolent of Beings.

If this perfectly righteous governor should

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should see it necessary to allot us a considerable portion of evil, to *visit our iniquities with a rod, and our transgressions with stripes*, let us bow to the appointment. If severe discipline is necessary to correct our evil habits, or prevent their growth, let us bless God that he condescends to administer it. Kind is the process, however sharp, by which our corruptions are killed; and our graces pruned and rendered more vigorous. David felt the full force of this thought when he said; *Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.*

The Almighty is infinitely good, as well as wise. He has no delight in the infelicities of his creatures. He will never give them a larger draught of the cup of sorrow than is necessary for their final advantage. *Surely it is meet to say unto God; I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me.* Under these views of the Almighty, therefore, the Psalmist was silent: “*I opened not my mouth, because THOU didst it.* Thou, who doest all things wisely and well;



well; from whom no consequence, however remote, can be hid; thou hast seen fit to deal in this manner with me, and I will not, I dare not murmur. Thy glorious designs are always directed to the advancement of the best interests of thy church and people. I submit to the afflictive dispensations of thy righteous government. I will not suffer my heart to entertain, or my tongue to utter, a sentiment of disapprobation of any of thy proceedings."

3. A christian can add, as well as the Psalmist, because my COVENANT God hath done this, *I will not open my mouth*. In the midst of all his distresses, this was the joy of David's heart. This was the *great rock in a weary land*, under which he found shelter and repose. *Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting COVENANT, ordered in all things and sure\**. If the king of Israel could find such rich consolation in contemplating the blessings of a temporal covenant, what ought a christian to feel? If David, notwithstanding many unfavour-

\* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

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able appearances, could confidently expect its accomplishment, with how much stronger faith may a believer in Jesus anticipate the fulfilment of a covenant, better in its nature, and *established upon better promises!* The continuance of the Jewish throne to his posterity, was the grand object of that covenant in which David experienced so much joy: every necessary good in the present world, and eternal felicity in the world to come, are the nobler articles of the christian compact.

Uninterrupted prosperity upon earth, even upon the supposition of general obedience, is no part of the christian covenant. Spirituality, and ultimate security, are its distinguishing properties. Its tenor is expressed in general terms. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* No specific temporal promises are made: no external present circumstances pointed out as a criterion of an interest in its blessings, or a rejection from them. This covenant may well be stiled *a sure and an everlasting covenant.* It is firmer than

than the heavens. It rests on the purpose of an unchangeable God, and is sealed by the gift of his own Son. Its peculiar blessings have no necessary dependance upon earthly things; they are of an higher, even a spiritual nature—serenity of mind; peace of conscience; joy in the holy spirit; delightful intercourse, and communion with God; frequent and fervent aspirations after heavenly things; a noble superiority to the trifles of time, and a firm abiding hope, that when the revolutions of time are stopped, the knowledge, purity, and bliss of eternity will be theirs.

This is a faint sketch of the privileges of that *new and better covenant* which the goodness of God has framed; which Jesus of Nazareth lived to publish, died to ratify, and rose again to carry into effect. Contemplating these privileges, a true christian will never be greatly disturbed. Whatever befalls him in his passage through this vale of tears, he will endeavour to improve. A complaint may, sometimes, escape his lips, but no hard thoughts of the divine goodness will dwell in his heart.

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He has full confidence in the care of his benevolent Father, his best friend, and his covenant God. He has no doubt but that he will support him under every trial, and cause *all things to work together* for his final advantage. Soothed, and tranquilized, by these comfortable and elevating sentiments, he will bear up under every pressure. However afflicted, he will soon recover his composure and dependence, and say, with the devout Psalmist, "*I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.*" Thou art my sovereign, and hast an indisputable right to dispose of me. Thou art infinitely wise, and of the various methods that might accomplish thy designs, wilt, uniformly, chuse the best. Thy throne is righteousness, and thy ways are truth. I acknowledge my utter inability to reach the one, or explore the other. But of this I am certain, that the *Judge of the whole earth* will ever do that which is *right*. He, whose tender mercies are filling the universe, will inflict no unnecessary blow. The God, and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the God of all consolation,

solation, will keep his covenant, and remember his mercy for ever. *This God shall be my God, even unto death, and after death my eternal portion.*"

The grand object of every providential infliction is to bring us to this divine temper. As an IMPROVEMENT, therefore, of what has been said, I shall mention some particulars upon which we may examine our hearts, and see whether the proper ends of affliction have been produced.

This is effected,

1. When we are more humbled under a sense of our sins. Pain and sorrow are the offspring of sin. This *root of bitterness*, which grew even in the garden of Eden, has shot its baneful fibres into every human heart. Sin has polluted every imagination, dimmed the splendor of all human virtue, and brought forth, in every life, the fruits of trouble and distress. At this moment we are all guilty before God, and that, not by any necessitating decree of the Almighty, but by our own free and deliberate choice. By transgressions, properly chargeable upon ourselves, we

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are rendered obnoxious to the divine anger; and, therefore, the lowest humility, and the deepest repentance become us. To force us into ourselves, to lay open to us the plague of our own hearts, and, thus, to bring us to reflection and amendment, are the grand ends for which afflictions and troubles are sent. A proof that these ends are answered is, our being brought to a sense of our real situation; and led, by faith and repentance, to lay hold of *the hope set before us in the Gospel*. Then, being sensible of the vast importance of the divine favour, we shall seek after it with our *whole heart*. Pride will be hidden from us. We shall bow the neck to the yoke of Christ. We shall clearly see our misery without the Saviour; and delight in that humbling way of salvation which he has proposed to mankind. When this is our experience, we may glory in our troubles, and conclude, upon good grounds, that they have all been sanctified.

Afflictions have had their proper effect,  
2. When, upon the loss of some of our enjoyments, we are more thankful for those



those which are left. Such a temper is the best evidence of resignation to the Divine appointments. It proves that we are not angry with God. That we believe he has acted like a wise and tender parent. It evinces a proper trust in the Lord; and shows that we, really, did not *idolize* the comforts of which we are stripped. Suppose a dear relative is removed; such quiet submission is a proof, that all our happiness was not centered in a frail, fellow worm. It manifests that when we said, *The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away*, we have sincerely added, *and blessed be the name of the Lord!*

We should ask ourselves, in such cases, whether our comforts are not taken away as a mark of the Divine displeasure. We are liable to err on both sides. We may think too highly, or too meanly, of our blessings. Whatever we have reason to think we have done, let us be careful for the future. If we have neglected those which are gone, let us set a double value on such as remain. If we have suffered

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our hearts to doat upon mere earthly possessions, let us take care in time to come—We may be beggar'd both here and hereafter.

Afflictions have properly operated,

3. When our patience is encreased. In the most favourable situations of human life, troubles are to be found. By this appointment the impartiality of the Divine government is strongly marked. The court, and the cottage: the palaces of wealth, the habitations of middle life, and the huts of poverty, all have their share of calamity. Cares light upon gilded roofs; and the bed of down is full as often the residence of pain and anguish, as the bed of straw. This is no new situation of things. Job could say, from bitter experience, *Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.* Even the Redeemer of the World was *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* To the best characters, the remark of the Writer to the Hebrews will frequently apply: *ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye*  
may

may calmly wait the fulfilment of his *promises*. The full reward, is not always conferred as soon as the work is performed.

In suffering circumstances, to have our patience encreased, and our trust in the divine mercy in lively exercise, is an evident token for good. Sorrow for sin, with humility and hope under its corrections, are proofs of a truly christian spirit. Under their influence, and from the compassion of God, we may expect the most glorious issue of things.

Afflictions have their true influence,

4. When they convince us of the emptiness of earth; and fix our affections on a better world. No experience seems sufficient to correct this error of the human heart. In this instance, example sets up its beacon in vain. We behold the coast covered with shipwrecks, and yet we run our own vessel into the destructive harbour. We set our affections upon mere earthly objects. We grasp at bubbles which we know will burst. We twine our hopes with a shadow, and expect an enduring substance. It is only affliction



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and disappointment which can undeceive us. They are blessed sorrows which have this effect! *Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Quit with earth, for earth has nothing which can yield you full satisfaction. It is a wilderness: it is a seat of banishment: it is not your rest.

In heaven fulness of joy dwells; rivers of pleasure roll; knowledge of good without a mixture of evil; taste of pleasure without a sense of pain; the vision of God; the presence of Christ; the company of the heavenly host. These are objects worthy the pursuit of an immortal spirit; seek after these in the right way, and you will not seek in vain. Meekly submit to the dispensations of Heaven. Maintain a lively faith in the hopes of the Gospel. Steadily pursue every thing recommended by the precepts and example of the blessed Jesus. Thus do, and your souls shall live for ever. The pressure of affliction, like the weight upon a palm-tree, will only make you more vigorous. While, with the Psalmist, you *open not your mouth,*  
*because*

*because God has done it, you shall be preparing for that blessed abode, where you shall open it in songs of joy. Where you shall triumphantly exclaim, "Blessed be God for all my sorrows! Those light afflictions which were but for a moment, have wrought out for me an eternal weight of glory." AMEN.*

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XIX.

## SERMON XX.

ON TIME.

GENESIS XLVII. 8.

*And PHARAOH said unto JACOB, How  
old art thou?*

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XX.

**T**HE simplicity of ancient times is beautifully exhibited in the interesting story of Joseph. He had been made an instrument, in the hand of Providence, of the salvation of Egypt. For some years, he had been inferior only to Pharaoh in that kingdom. I need not recapitulate a story so well known. Jacob was sent for by his son. It was extremely natural that Pharaoh should wish to see the father of his able and favourite minister. The interview



terview took place, but we find it was short. The etiquette and bustle of a court; the difficulty of conversing where different languages were spoken; and the age of the Patriarch, may all account for this brevity. Pharaoh, though upon the whole a worthy character, would probably think it great condescension to converse with an old shepherd. Jacob, bowed down with years and sorrows, would consider it as a visit of ceremony, and be glad when it was over.

His behaviour upon the occasion did him honour. Indeed a virtuous, modest, pious old man, is always an object of esteem and veneration. *How old art thou?* was the question of the Monarch. The copious reply of the Patriarch bears witness at once to his piety, and his age. *The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been; and have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage: And he blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before him.* How full

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full of simplicity and goodness is this language? Longing, we may presume, for a better world, he terms this life a pilgrimage to it. Compared with ours, his days had been many; but contrasted with those of his remoter ancestors, they had been *few*; and, considering the sorrows he had felt, for a great part of his life, we cannot wonder that he called them *evil*. It does not, however, follow from hence, that Jacob indulged a repining spirit. We have many proofs that his piety was cheerful, as well as sincere. He *blessed* Pharaoh; and in thus doing, tacitly, at least, acknowledged the goodness of a watchful Providence. He also did this explicitly, and fully, in the solemn and affectionate language of his dying bed. Blessing the sons of Joseph, these are his words: *God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk; the God who fed me all my life long unto this day; the angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.*

Many useful remarks might be made upon the history and character of Jacob; at this time, I shall only attend to such as  
are

are suggested by Pharaoh's question, *How old art thou?* In doing this I shall, *First*, offer a few thoughts upon the nature and value of time: and, *Secondly*, propose some questions by way of improvement.

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I. We are to attend to the nature and value of time. Plain and common must be the remarks here to be made, but they may not, on that account, be the less important. Novelty is by no means necessary to utility. I observe,

1. Time is entirely the gift of God. We cannot add to our existence a single moment; and much more is it evident, that we cannot communicate existence to ourselves. Had the *fiat* of the Almighty never gone forth, the world we inhabit, and the millions of worlds about which philosophy speculates, had been eternal blanks. Were the energy of the Divine operation withheld, this mighty and beautiful globe would instantly dissolve. No light would shine, no seasons would revolve, no existence would remain. Not all the wisdom of the philosophers, and artificers;



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artificers; not all the power of the armies of the earth, could cause a spring to renovate the world. Not a blade of grass; not a single bud, upon a single tree, could the skill and strength of all mankind produce. Were the sacred energy withdrawn, not another moment would the myriads of men and animals, which now people our globe, draw the breath of life. God of nature and grace! are we thus utterly incapable of doing any thing without thine aid; and shall we dare to do any thing contrary to thy will? Our time, like every thing else, is communicated by thy power; and suspended entirely upon thy pleasure. Forbid it, Heavenly Father! that we should abuse, or throw it away.

It is very evident that *time*, with respect to us, must be extremely precarious and uncertain. We cannot, of ourselves, begin the reckoning. The number of our days cannot be increased, and ought not to be diminished by any act of ours. We may curtail, but it is absolutely impossible that we should add to the length of our lives. At the longest supposable period, our  
time

time here is short. Of this truth we shall be more sensible as we advance in our journey. At the outset of life, when our ideas are few, our capacities not unfolded, and our experience nothing, it is no wonder that the lapse of time is not felt: but to remain children in this respect, when forty, fifty, or sixty years have passed over our heads, is folly which no excuse can palliate. This is indeed throwing *pearls before swine*. This is sacrificing to the idols of life, that part of our property in which the Almighty has a peculiar interest. If no portion of our *time* is given to him, what else, of the least value, can we offer for his acceptance? At all seasons the continuance of time is extremely uncertain. We can never say, that, to-morrow, we will absolutely do this or that: for it is always impossible to tell what *a day may bring forth*.

2. The unspeakable value of time is apparent from the great ends for which it is given. It is given us, particularly, for the solemn purpose of working out our own salvation. It is given us that we may  
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be prepared for the society of saints and angels in the eternal world. Can there be greater objects than these? Can our wisdom be better ascertained than in their pursuit? Can our folly be more flagrant, than in daring to neglect them?

Wisdom, says Solomon, by which he almost always means religion, *is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get this spiritual understanding.* But how is this to be done, if the mind is constantly occupied with things of a foreign and contrary nature? Two directly opposite pursuits cannot be carried on by the same man, at the same time. An uniformly divided heart will not be accepted by that God, who, with the utmost justice, requires the whole. *If, said the prophet Elijah to the Israelites, the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him! How long halt ye between two opinions?* Thus, my fellow professors, would I say to you: Make your election. Compare the two masters: One or the other of them you must serve. If, upon a fair computation, estimating the profit, and



and counting the cost, not only now, but for ever, this world is worthy a preference; give it that preference. Be consistent whatever you are. But if there is really no comparison. If the riches and pleasures which the world can bestow, are nothing without peace of conscience, and good hope towards God—If Jesus and salvation are beyond all price: if time, when contrasted with eternity, totally disappears, then let us hear no more of hesitation, and uncertainty:

Begone, deluding world, away!  
My Saviour calls, and I obey;  
Jesus for ever sets me free,  
I cannot part with Heaven for thee.

The favour of God is of such infinite importance, that every thing ought to yield to it. In the most favourable circumstances, the difficulties in a religious course are so numerous that a successful opposition to them, will call for our most vigorous and persevering exertions. We need not fear entering upon the discipline of the heart too soon: we shall find it an arduous

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arduous employment. If we fill up our time in the best mannner, we shall never arrive at the point in which we can fairly say, we have nothing more to learn, or to do: and till we do this, it is manifest, that we have no reason to complain of our time as being too long, or to fill it up with trifles, or sins.

Upon the best calculation, many deductions must be made. Much time is unavoidably consumed in sleep, and refreshment. The bulk of mankind must spend a great majority of their hours in procuring the absolute necessities of life. To say nothing, therefore, of relaxation and amusement; what a miserable pittance remains for self-examination; for communion with God; for the great concerns of a never-dying soul! Of what unspeakable importance do these considerations render the christian sabbath! What inexcusable murderers of time are those who waste it in idleness, or prostitute it to the purposes of intemperance and worldly lust! Is there any room for hope that a waste of time will be forgiven? Reason  
can

can afford none; and scripture will be explored in vain for this purpose. *Rejoice, O young man in thy youth; and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart; and in the sight of thine eyes; BUT KNOW THOU, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

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By way of APPLICATION, let us ask,

II. What is the language of Pharaoh's question when applied to us;—*How old art thou?*

1. It naturally suggests this enquiry; how far am I advanced in my mortal journey? Is it the morning, the meridian, the afternoon, or the evening of life, in which I now am? Each of these seasons has its peculiar duties, but diligence, and progress equally belong to them all. Time never stands still. Not a single moment ever returns; and every moment takes something away from the sum of our lives. What is the plain inference? That till we have done with time we shall never be justified in loitering. Eternity knows no

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vicissitude,

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vicissitude, or succession; but eternity dwells not upon earth. At every birth-day we know that we have completed such or such a number of years. We know that we have one year less to live; and that the nearer we draw to the usual goal of life, the less probability there is that another birth-day will return to us.

If we were in prison, and expected every day to die, how serious, may we suppose, would be our thoughts! How unfeigned and ardent would be all our devotions! But wherein, my brethren, except that we are not confined to a particular spot, is the mighty difference? What is earth, in one sense, but a prison to the immortal spirit? This very moment, for any thing we can tell, it may be said with respect to any one of us, his days are *numbered and finished*. God grant it may not be added, *Cut him down, BECAUSE he cumbereth the ground*.

2. Whatever age I am, what have I been doing? Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years have passed over my head: have I been wasting, or using my time? It is evident, from every thing about me, that I

was

was not intended for idleness. Labour is requisite for every purpose under heaven. Food and raiment will not come of themselves; and if these have been bestowed upon me by others, what do I owe them in return? No station of life *can* be without duties; and if I *reap* from the labours of others, it is just, it is religious, that I should *sow* for their advantage.

The business which above every thing else demands my attention, is the care of my soul. What have I been doing in this greatest of all concerns? I have been *planted* for so many years *in the courts of the Lord*. I have had *line upon line; and precept upon precept*. Has my *profiting appeared unto men*? Have those who knew me best, reason to speak in the best manner of me? Have they beheld me exemplary and punctual in the discharge of personal and social duties? Have they seen me watching over my own spirit; using my best efforts to curb and regulate my passions; and honestly endeavouring to clear my mind from prejudices and false biases? Has God, who knoweth the

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heart, been a witness to the sincerity with which I have laboured after purity and holiness? Can I appeal to him as to the secret humility of my heart—to my tenderness of conscience—and to the deep and unaffected contrition which I feel on account of my transgressions? Has he, and have my fellow-creatures, with whom I have been connected, been witnesses to the integrity and uprightness of my general conduct? Have I been serious without moroseness? Have I been severe to my own faults; and gentle and forgiving to the faults of others? Have the name and honour of my Saviour been dear to my heart? Have I loved to meditate upon his precepts: admired the glory and benevolence of his redemption: bowed with reverence and gratitude to all his doctrines: and endeavoured, though with many imperfections, *in simplicity and godly sincerity*, to copy his example? If I have, it is a matter of little importance how old I am? If there be any difference, I may honestly say, the older the better. The danger of apostacy is less; the trials which remain

remain can be but few; and in a little time I shall know the full import of the apostolic declaration, *To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*

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How old am I? will lead us to enquire,
3. What am I now doing? Are a multitude of my days already fled? Have I neglected my most important concerns? Is there a great deal to be done; and, upon the best calculation, but little time to do it in? What rousing considerations are these? Up, O my soul! and be doing. Time is never more mispent, than when we complain of the want of it. Let not another moment be lost. The days are evil; and my heart and affections have often been evil too: but it is enough; humbled to the dust in my own estimation, I will go to my Father. The prayer of contrition will be heard: the God of mercy will pity, and pardon, and console.

My family claim my attention; they shall have it. My parents lean upon me for support, I will be the staff of their old age. My children are looking for direction and example; I will put the Bible

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into their hands, and tell them, this is the *bread of life*. I will open the pages of the New Testament, and bid them tread in the footsteps of the Son of God. Thus prepared, I will send them into the world; and the prayer of Jacob for his grandsons, shall inform them where they are to look for aid. “My children, I consign you to the care of your heavenly parent: may that *God who hath fed me all my life long unto this day; the angel who redeemed me from all evil*, bless and preserve you.”

Every man, from the king to the cottager, should have a daily task, which he should feel it his duty to perform: We suppose it a virtuous one, and in that case, the performance of it, while it gives slumber to his eyes, will infuse serenity and peace into his heart.

4. *How old am I?* should induce us to ask, What can I yet do for God and my generation? Time is never really too long; on the contrary, it appears too short to him, who, to the extent of his capacity, employs it usefully and well. The aged faint may, doubtless, be excused from those
services

services which require great activity and exertion, but his work is not over. Though age enfeebles the hands, experience has enriched the head; and, if he deserves the name of an "*old disciple*," grace has softened and enlarged the heart. The counsels of wisdom drop with peculiar efficacy from such a tongue. That hoary head which is become a crown of righteousness, never teaches so impressively and gracefully a lesson as when it bows with cheerful resignation to heaven. Then is that blessed promise productive of *strong consolation*; "*To your old age I am he; even to hoary hairs I will carry you.*"

Thus I have enumerated a few of those thoughts to which the question in the text may naturally give rise. It frequently meets us in life; and, on our birth-days, it must occur to most of us. The end of our days will infallibly make us serious.—God grant that as they are expiring, one after another, we may *so number them as to apply our hearts unto wisdom!*

I shall close the whole with a quotation upon the subject of time, from the papers of a

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sensible and serious Quaker: it will serve as a recapitulation of what has been offered.

“ Time is precious, but its value is unknown to us. We shall attain this knowledge when we can no longer profit by it. Our friends require it of us as if it were nothing, and we give it them in the same manner. It is often a burden to us; and we know not what to do with it; but the day will come when a quarter of an hour will appear of more value to us than all the riches of the universe. God, who is liberal in all his other gifts, shows us, by the wise economy of his Providence, how circumspect we ought to be in the management of our time, for he never gives us two moments together. He only gives us the second as he takes away the first, and keeps the third in his own hands, leaving us in absolute uncertainty whether it shall ever be ours or not. Time is given us that we may take care for eternity, and eternity will not be too long to regret the loss of our time, if we have mispent it.”

SERMON

SERMON XXI.

HUMAN MORTALITY CONSIDERED.

PSALM LXXXIX. 47.

Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?

THE sentiment contained in this desponding question, is often felt by the human heart when in perplexed and sorrowful circumstances. When our expectations are disappointed; when our comforts are diminished; when dear and amiable relatives are removed, then we are ready to cry out, Why are all men made in vain? Why is life so precarious and full of trouble? Wherefore are pain and sickness the lot of man? How happens it that the most useful, and desirable lives,

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are frequently the soonest terminated? Like vapours, and bubbles upon the stream of time, they appear for a little while and then vanish away. *Lord! what is the hope of man!* In a moment, without any warning, the sun sinks—the days of youth are *numbered and finished*. *What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?* As a flood, the generations of mortality are constantly passing away. They are like the grafs and flowers of the field; in the morning they grow up and flourish, in the evening they are cut down and wither. Lord! how long shall this scene of vicissitude and desolation last? In the midst of life we are in death. *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?*

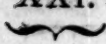
It is natural that we should feel strongly when our comforts are taken from us, and religion does not forbid us to mourn. It is not *sorrow*, but the *excess* of it, which we are commanded to resist. We are not insensible stones, nor are we required to extinguish any of the passions which God has implanted in our frame. With respect to that grief which we must feel at the death
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of those we tenderly love, in general we do not indulge it enough; I will explain what I mean.

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It cannot be supposed that by indulging grief, I would recommend a repining and discontented frame of mind—that I would advise the mourner to quarrel with God, and refuse to admit the common comforts of life, or the superior consolations of religion—far be this from me; what I mean is, that we should labour to retain much longer than we generally do, that seriousness of thought, that tenderness of spirit, that dread of sin as the cause of death, that sense of the vanity of all earthly objects, and that lively wish for the Divine favour and support, which, in such seasons, we must, in some degree, feel. With tenderness let us dwell upon what was amiable in the character of our departed friends, and resolve to imitate all their virtues—thus, by the Divine blessing, we shall find that they were not made in vain. Full of instruction are the lectures of the grave—my fellow mortals, let us not shun the

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the salutary truths they impart—let us not too soon avert our ears from them!

It is appointed to all men once to die. I know, says Job, that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all the living. None of us can expect to be exempted from what is the universal lot of man, and therefore, while we should not repine at what cannot be avoided, neither should we think or act, as if the most important part of our existence were to be passed in the present world. *What, says our Lord, shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* On every account it is the part of a prudent, manly, and religious spirit, frequently to attend to its transitory condition, to number its days, and apply itself to true wisdom.

Let us fix it on our minds, that health and strength are no absolute security for life. The firm persuasion that in a little time we must lie down in the grave, and rejoin our original dust, will furnish us with the most powerful motives to live
so,

so, that we may entertain the Divine hope of living for ever! We are wholly ignorant of the day of dissolution. To us it is all uncertain whether a few years or a few hours, will be the extent of our mortal existence. We are equally ignorant of the *manner* in which death will make his attack. Whether we shall have any previous warning of his approach, or in an instant be hurried to our account. Perhaps, some lingering disease may give us full notice that our end is drawing on, and afford us a long opportunity of arranging both our temporal and spiritual concerns. Perhaps accident or violence may cut us off in a moment, and leave us no time to prepare for the stroke. If life be not immediately taken, our reason may; and, to all the moral purposes of life, we may be dead while we live; and of this we are all fully convinced, that *somehow, somewhere, and at sometime*, we must die. No covenant can be made with the grave. All ranks and conditions, all ages and capacities, are equally the victims of the devouring sepulchre. The infant of a day old; the hoary-headed

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headed pilgrim who is worn down in the journey of life; and the sprightly youth in the bloom and vigour of his strength, are frequently stretched in the same instant, beneath the *clods of the valley*.

This has ever been the picture which the world has exhibited. The generations of men have been regularly and gradually coming in, and going out of life. Here no individual has a continuing city. In the grave, the common receptacle, high and low; rich and poor; learned and ignorant; young and old; the oppressor and the oppressed, sleep together. Without revelation, this is all that we know of man. The flowers, the grass, and the various vegetable productions of nature, revive and flourish year after year. New buds and blossoms, new leaves and branches, give a kind of immortality to these inanimate forms; but not so with man. No traces of his existence are visible after the stream of oblivion has passed over him. A beautiful verdure may cover his grave, but of the mouldered inhabitant, a little indiscriminate dust is all which remains.

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Were this, indeed, the boundary of our prospects, there would be some reason for the language of the text; but even then it could not be said with justice, that men were made in vain; for I observe,

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1. *Existence is in itself a blessing.* This is more a matter of feeling than of argument. That it is generally esteemed a blessing, is evident from the severe sufferings mankind are willing to undergo rather than die. If, therefore, the present life were *all* that we had to expect, it ought not to be said that we had been made in vain. Tribes of animals are continually coming into being, passing a short time in our company, and then perishing by accident, or for our, or their own use. Valuable ends are answered by their temporary existence, and because, when those ends are accomplished they pass away, surely, it does not follow that they were made in vain.

Thus it would be right to argue with respect to man, supposing that he were never to exist beyond the grave. To exist at all, is not in his own power, and the possession

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session of life is, certainly, a pleasure—to have pleasure for a short season, is better than not to have it at all. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fish in their liquid element, are all proofs of this assertion. They are evidently “glad to be alive.” They give many indications, that to them existence is bliss, and, therefore, without considering their usefulness, as articles of food to us, and to one another, it is manifest that not one of them is made in vain. Considering man as capable of only a temporary existence, the same arguments will apply to him. I have thus stated the case in its lowest form; blessed be God! there are many better reasons than this to answer the complaint in the text.

Man is not made in vain, if,

2. He is the means of assisting another race in the acquisition of knowledge, and the attainment of happiness. Instruction and experience are the means by which we encrease our stock of knowledge. To communicate to others what we have found beneficial to ourselves, is not an ungrateful

ful task. To pay to those who are coming after us those advices and instructions for which we are debtors to our immediate predecessors, is a duty and a pleasure. When, therefore, duty is discharged, shall we say that those who discharged it were made in vain? God forbid. We will not make so ungrateful a return to the patience and affection, the wisdom and tenderness, of our parents and tutors. Heedless and helpless as we all are in the outset of life, what would become of us if there were none to be the *guides of our youth*?

As we advance in our journey, what infinite advantages do we derive from examples of steady virtue, affectionate obedience, calm submission, and extensive usefulness! What a spur to emulation is a good example! It is more forcible than precepts a thousand times repeated: they may be forgotten, but the lovely and discreet behaviour of a virtuous and prudent character cannot fail of impressing the heart. It is a constant living lecture; and if we shut our ears against good advice, we cannot shut our eyes against the excel-

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lence and utility of a good example. The person then that sets it, can never be said to have been made in vain.

3. Such a creature as man cannot be made in vain, because, not only the beautiful form of his body, but the excellent structure of his mind, is peculiarly fitted to speak forth the glory of his Creator. Let atheism pride itself in the rational discovery, that mere senseless *chance* produced such a creature as man; we will ascribe his existence to a powerful and wise intelligence, and we can bear the ridicule to which this opinion will expose us with perfect indifference. Even the philosophy of heathens could say, *Nothing can give what it does not itself possess.* In this sentiment we heartily join, and therefore are not at all anxious to dispute with those who ascribe the communication of the human understanding to a cause which possesses no understanding at all.

We say then, that the existence of such a creature as man is not in vain, because it proves the existence and perfections of a glorious Creator.

This

This argument is prodigiously strengthened by the actual exercise and display of goodness in a human being. When we see the powers of the mind called into action; when we behold temptations to evil bravely resisted; provocations to resentment overcome; afflictions supported with patience; opportunities of doing good gladly seized; time diligently improved, and uniform endeavours made to act with consistency and usefulness; then we can reverse the language of the text and cry out, "this man, this woman, was not *made in vain*." We have thus an opportunity of seeing moral excellence exemplified. We see that prudence, benevolence, and seriousness, are something more than empty names; and, had we no assurance of it, we might venture to hope that such characters would not be annihilated when they left our world.

This leads me to observe,

4. That with the New Testament in our hands, we can return a triumphant answer to the querelous enquiry which a season of dejection and distress induced the Psalmist

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to make. Man is *not* made in vain; for, besides every thing which has been already advanced, he is designed for an eternal state of existence. Of this glorious state, nothing but a life of folly and vice can prevent his attainment. *The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* During their passage through this preparatory state, the souls of the virtuous often, in holy meditation, look to the end of their course. They anticipate the hour when stripped of the flesh, and all its frailties and cares, they shall enter the unknown world, and appear before God. To them it is a serious and awful, but not a terrifying thought. By the assistance of Divine grace, and in the light of a Divine faith, they are passing the season of their earthly pilgrimage. Humanity shudders at dissolution, but *the righteous hath hope in his death.* Though the places which once knew the virtuous here must know them no longer, and the eyes of survivors look for them in vain, yet they all *live to God.* Death is only a dark passage to another,
and

and a better life. *Write, saith the spirit, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.* From the resurrection of our Divine Redeemer, the Apostle argues, in the most conclusive manner, the resurrection of his faithful followers; and, therefore, he calls upon believers, when mourning over their departed friends, *not to sorrow as those who have no hope.* He exhorts them to be patiently waiting at their posts; diligent in their respective employments, and ready for the coming of our Lord.

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This is a world of disappointments and shadows, but beyond the grave all are glorious realities. Every thing is solid and durable. There are no disappointed hopes; no baffled expectations; no broken purposes; no sorrowful partings in the heavenly world. Not a dejected countenance, not a falling tear, not an aching heart, not a weary limb will ever be found there. Fulness of joy is the portion of each happy inhabitant. In this world flesh and heart will fail; but in that which is to

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come God is the strength of their heart, and their portion for evermore.

Where now is the question in the text? Have such characters as these been made in vain? No, my friends, they have been made for noble purposes indeed; every moment of their being has been important. If the beginning of their journey lay through a wilderness, they were not unprovided for, nor forsaken. Like *Jonathan*, they found *honey* in the desert; and they *drank of the brook in the way*. While they lived, they adorned the stations in which they were placed; they instructed the ignorant, and clothed the naked; they assisted the needy, and comforted those that mourned; and when they died they left a good name to embalm their memories, and stimulate others to tread in their steps. But this is not all; they honoured their Maker by the exercise of real, unaffected goodness; and now they are honoured by him in Heaven. Truly, it was NOT *in vain* that these persons were made.

In this manner, christians, the religion  
of



of Jesus justifies the Almighty as to the present condition of man. Let us APPLY and IMPROVE these considerations, and be careful that we are *not living in vain*. Our business upon earth is to prepare for the glories of heaven. That we may be rendered fit for that abode, we are made capable of pure, moral attainments. We are, also, placed in such circumstances as will, if they are duly improved, give us a relish for heavenly delights. But all this will not be accomplished without many efforts on our part. We must exercise a strict government over our hearts and lives. We must moderate and subdue all our passions. We must learn to place our happiness, not upon the frail and gross pleasures of this world, but upon pure mental and divine joys. Our felicity must be sought for in peace of conscience, joy in the holy spirit, an earnest and deliberate wish to resemble our blessed Lord, and to become like the pure inhabitants of the future world. No sorrow wrings their hearts, nor saddens their countenances—they are ever happy, because they are ever sinless. If we are not acquiring these dispositions,

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and forming an inclination for these delights, we are living in vain. At the bar of God, and in the day of judgment, we shall have no excuse to make if all our time has been mispent, and all our talents wasted. We cannot be ignorant that we are frail, dying creatures. Every pain that we feel; every funeral we behold; every church-yard we pass through, must remind us of this solemn truth.

Men and brethren what are we doing? Time is spreading his broad pinions, and with the utmost rapidity stealing day after day from us. What is there in any thing about us that can justify sloth or inattention? Upon the edge of a precipice shall we slumber? Upon the confines of eternity shall we dare to trifle or transgress? Readers of every age! upon your everlasting welfare I charge you to listen. Are your heads grey, your eyes dim, and your limbs trembling with age, upon what can you presume? What a brittle, slender barrier is there between you and death? Improve, I beseech you, the few moments you have left. If you have lingered long, the door is not shut—if you have been  
careless,

careless, there is still hope—even if you have been vicious, you ought not to despair. But if you have been holy and good, what unutterable joy is your's: salvation is near you, indeed; the gate of heaven is open, and the crown of glory is ready.

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You that are in the middle and prime of your days, trust not the syren voice which tells you, that there is no room either for fear or caution. How frequently are your coevals numbered with the dead! How vain, alas! is the strength of man! His beauty consumes like the moth—in a moment his purposes are broken off, his countenance is changed, and he is sent away! Be not confident of life, for you have no power over it. A moment may snap its firmest thread, and extinguish its brightest flame. It is characteristic of the wicked, that *because they have no changes they forget God*. Oh! never let conscience have to assert that this is your case. Let piety sanctify every action, and prayer occupy a part of every day, and then if in an hour that you think not, your Lord should come, you will be found ready.

By



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By the youngest, who is capable of reflection, let the voice of friendly admonition be heard. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth: It is wholly uncertain how long you may be permitted to stay in this world. Do your best—perform with cheerfulness and alacrity the duties of your early age; and if an early blight sweep you from the garden of life, you will be transplanted into a more friendly clime—a region in which

“ Eternal spring abides,  
And never withering flowers.”

*There* you shall be united to a glorious assembly who are exempted from all imperfection; who drink continually of the river of life, and who are flourishing in immortal youth and beauty.

What can I add more! May the God of the spirits of all flesh, bless these plain suggestions, and render them instrumental in promoting the eternal welfare of all into whose hands they shall come. TO HIM, THROUGH CHRIST JESUS, BE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

HYMNS

# HYMNS

ADAPTED TO THE PRECEDING DISCOURSES.

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## HYMN I.

ON MEDITATION.

**L**ET sober reason now controul  
 The trifling fallies of the soul.  
 Th' eternal God; his works, and ways,  
 Demand my thought, and claim my praise.

What wonders strike, where'er I turn!  
 Above, what starry splendors burn!  
 Below, how teems the fruitful ground!  
 What life, and fragrance breathe around!

All nature spreads an ample page,  
 Proclaiming God, from age to age;  
 But in the written word we trace  
 The nobler wonders of his grace.

There

There we behold JEHOVAH lead  
From Egypt, Israel's favour'd seed;  
And there, transporting thought, we find  
A Saviour given to all mankind.

As evening terminates each day,  
Let me my heart and life survey;  
And on a peaceful pillow lie,  
Resign'd to wake, or sleep, or die.

While thus my meditations roll  
On subjects sacred to the soul;  
Great God, accept my humble praise,  
And guide and guard me all my days.

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## HYMN II.

ON DILIGENCE IN BUSINESS.

WHATE'ER the task by Heaven  
assign'd,  
That, let our hands pursue!  
And with a firm, unruffled mind,  
Its various duties do.

The



The virtuous labours of the day  
Insure a sweet repose ;  
But he who trifles life away  
Nor ease, nor honour knows.

In business, diligent and fair,  
Let us with God abide,  
And sanctify with fervent prayer  
Life's ever-flowing tide.

Thus shall we all our wants supply,  
(If Heaven vouchsafe to bless)  
And lay with ease a portion by  
For children of distress.

All-seeing Searcher of the heart!  
Preserve our souls from pride ;  
Thy daily grace to each impart,  
And all our motives guide.

On every labour deign to smile,  
And to our hopes be given,  
Whene'er we close our mortal toil,  
A treasure safe in heaven:

HYMN

## HYMN III.

## ON SELF-SATISFACTION.

**B**LEST is the man who hears within  
Conscience, with fair unbiass'd voice,  
Acquit him of deliberate sin,  
And bid his honest heart rejoice.

Where'er thro' life's uncertain day,  
Or bus'ness calls, or pleasure leads;  
With God, the guardian of his way,  
Onward and cheerful he proceeds.

Against him prejudice may rave,  
His credit, calumny assail;  
But all their malice he can brave,  
For virtue is his coat of mail.

Each day he drinks the cup of peace,  
Fresh from his *own* unfailing springs;  
And oft, to reach the realms of bliss,  
Devotion lends him angel wings.

Contentment

Contentment spreads a daily feast;  
Religion sanctifies the board;  
And calm, at night, he sinks to rest,  
Safe in the arms of Nature's Lord.

Pure and sublime are present joys,  
But purer far, sublimer still,  
Those that remain, when earthly toys  
No longer with distraction fill.

When enter'd far within the vail,  
Divine delights, indeed, begin;  
And from the streams which never fail,  
He drinks "immortal vigour in."

---

#### HYMN IV.

ON BEING ASHAMED OF APPEARING  
RELIGIOUS.

**I**S there on earth a nobler name  
Than Jesus to be found?  
Who can assert a higher claim,  
Or more with truth abound?

The



The Son of God, adorn'd with grace,  
Commission'd from above;  
He bears to our rebellious race  
The olive branch of love.

Behold his gentle spirit feel  
The sufferings of mankind;  
And with a word, the sorrows heal  
Of body and of mind.

How noble were the truths he taught!  
How pure the life he led!  
And shall another Lord be sought,  
And we disown our HEAD!

Asham'd of Jesus! Shall we let  
Our heavenly prospects go?  
And, madly, at defiance set  
The threats of final woe?

Forbid it, Lord, nor let us yield  
To this unworthy shame;  
But each with holy courage fill'd  
Rejoice in Jesus' name.

HYMN

## HYMN V.

## ON THE INFLUENCE OF EXAMPLE.

A MOUNTAIN with a city crown'd,  
Secures attention all around;  
Conspicuous as in heaven a star,  
The traveller views it from afar.

So in the moral landscape stand  
Professors, mark'd on every hand;  
Their virtues beam with radiance fair,  
But faults and follies also glare.

*All* are not cities rais'd on high,  
Expos'd to every passing eye:  
But *none* are so obscurely plac'd,  
That all their influence runs to waste.

We see *example* every day,  
Rule with an almost boundless sway;  
On every age, in every place,  
Its powerful energy we trace.

F f

Then

Then let us watch with all our care,  
Lest *our example* prove a snare ;  
Let each within himself maintain,  
Religion's pure and sacred reign.

O thou ! whose all-discerning eye,  
Can every thought and motive spy :  
Direct, we pray thee, every heart  
To act the wise and virtuous part.

---

## HYMN VI.

## ON THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

**N**OT till the foe hath left the field  
The warrior claims the crown,  
Nor, with an enemy unquell'd,  
Can lay *his harness* down.

So, conflicts in the field of life  
Will every step attend ;  
Nor can we cease the moral strife  
'Till earthly labours end.

But



But shall this thought our souls dismay,  
Or damp the voice of prayer?  
No, God himself shall guard our way,  
And break through every snare.

Still on our Leader let us place  
A humble, steady eye,  
And follow, through the wilderness,  
Where'er his banners fly.

We know, beyond the flood of death  
A balmy region lies;  
Where groves of heavenly fragrance breathe,  
And springs of joy arise.

There shall the weary faint repose,  
And on his temples place  
Th' unfading crown which God bestows,  
The rich reward of grace.

His Saviour there shall bless his eyes,  
And from a countless throng,  
To God's unchanging love shall rise  
The never-ending song.

## HYMN VII.

*A New Year's Sermon.*

SUN! STAND THOU STILL.

“**S**TAND still, refulgent orb of day,”  
A Jewish hero cries;  
So shall, at last, an angel say,  
And tear it from the skies.

A flame intenser than the sun  
Shall melt his golden urn;  
Time's empty glass no more shall run,  
Nor human years return.

Then, with immortal splendor bright,  
That glorious orb shall rise,  
Which through eternity shall light  
The new-created skies.

His moral triumph then complete,  
Jesus, our Lord, shall place  
Before his heavenly Father's seat  
The heirs of life and grace.

Unceasing

Unceasing flows the mortal tide,  
Unceasing let it flow ;  
If thou, O Lord, our guard and guide,  
Wilt daily grace bestow !

Then, SUN of nature ! roll along,  
And bear our years away ;  
The sooner shall we join the song  
Of everlasting day.

---

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### HYMN VIII.

#### ON HABIT.

AS torrents raging unconfin'd,  
Sweep mounds and men away,  
So habit triumphs o'er the mind  
With fierce unbounded sway.

How hard the yoke, how strong the chain,  
Habitual sinners bear !  
From vice to vice they rush again  
To mis'ry and despair.

F f 3

But



But like the progress of the day  
Habitual goodness grows ;  
It shines and brightens all the way,  
And dazzles at its close.

Almighty God ! our progress guide,  
Assisting grace bestow ;  
O'er every doubtful step preside,  
And bless where'er we go.

---

### HYMN IX.

#### REASONS AGAINST ANXIETY.

**L**ET not an anxious thought molest  
The sacred calm of virtue's breast.  
Unknown to-morrow ; God obey,  
And taste the blessings of to-day.

The winged tenants of the air,  
His constant bounties daily share ;  
And will his Providence deny  
His nobler offspring a supply !

His

His boundless power, his wond'rous grace,  
In ages long ago we trace;  
And ages yet to come shall find  
The same unchang'd, benignant mind.

Jehovah ne'er will quit his throne,  
Or lay his gracious sceptre down:  
The *present* and the *past* he sees,  
The *future* hangs on his decrees.

This mighty God our fathers led,  
By him have we been cloth'd and fed;  
And shall we now distrust his care,  
And sink the victims of despair?

Before us, what a prospect lies?  
What peace and joy beyond the skies?  
Good God! forgive, that for an hour  
We doubted, or thy love, or power.

Shall we repine, shall we distrust?  
O Heavenly Father! keep us just;  
Accept our thanks for favours given,  
And bear us on to thee and heaven.

## HYMN X.

ON THE NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE  
OF BEING PREPARED FOR TROUBLE,

**I**N every state, in every place,  
Are multitudes who mourn;  
Distress attends the human race  
As sparks are upwards borne.

If lesser trials spread dismay,  
And terrify the soul;  
How shall we stand, when like a sea  
The waves of trouble roll?

Support us, ever blessed Lord,  
And by distress refine;  
May trials evidence afford  
That we are truly thine.

Wean us from earth, and earthly things,  
By salutary pain:  
We'll own thy love, great King of kings!  
Nor of the rod complain,

From



From evil, thy supreme decree  
Is still educating good;  
And beams of glory we can see  
Enlighten death's dark flood.

Each vanquish'd trouble shall increase  
The sense of heavenly joy,  
And nothing rise, th' eternal bliss  
To lessen or destroy.

---

### HYMN XI.

ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

**W**HO, proud and rash, shall dare dispute  
The heavenly Potter's right to choose,  
Which lump of *equal clay* shall suit  
A nobler, or a baser use?

With equal eye, as Lord of all,  
He views the wide creation round;  
Here, sees a trembling sparrow fall,  
And there, a monarch press the ground,  
Stations

Stations and talents he bestows,  
And as he more or less assign'd ;  
So when the day of life shall close,  
He more or less expects to find.

He does not with unjust demand  
Expect to reap in fields unsown ;  
For truth, and love, and justice stand  
Th' eternal pillars of his throne.

Who then, beneath the equal reign  
Of laws impartial, wise, and kind,  
Shall dare to murmur or complain,  
Whate'er the part by heaven assign'd ?

All-righteous God ! accept our praise,  
For all that our Redeemer taught ;  
And guide us through this mortal maze,  
To joys above our utmost thought.

HYMN

## HYMN XII.

## THE GOSPEL PEARL.

**I**S there a pearl whose peerless worth  
Exceeds the richest pearls of earth?  
Where, O my soul, below the skies,  
Can I obtain the matchless prize?

Shall I explore Peruvian caves,  
Or dive beneath old ocean's waves;  
Can splendid courts the jewel yield,  
Or is it hid in vict'ry's field?

Alas! through earth we seek in vain,  
No gem like this does earth contain;  
But in the gospel's sacred leaves,  
The heavenly pearl the Saviour gives.

"That book of life, that sure record,"  
Where faith can view a rising Lord:  
True riches can, through life, impart,  
And calm in death the throbbing heart.

Am



Am I a merchant here below,  
And seeking pearls where'er I go?  
Great God! this jewel, all divine,  
Teach me to make for ever mine.

Whate'er I lose, whate'er endure,  
This treasure may I still secure;  
And when I've past the dreary tomb,  
Find it in my eternal home.

---

### HYMN XIII.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

**H**OSANNA! let us join to sing  
The glories of our rising king,  
Recount his victories, and tell  
How Jesus triumph'd when he fell.

Soon as the morning's earliest ray  
Brings on the third, th' appointed day;  
Behold the angel cleave the skies,  
Roll back the stone, and *Jesus* rise!

With

With strength immortal forth he comes,  
And power and life from GOD resumes;  
The days of pain and sorrow past,  
His triumph shall for ever last.

The seal in fragments scatter'd round,  
The soldiers trembling on the ground,  
The empty grave—these all combine  
To prove the Saviour's claims divine.

His mission thus the FATHER seal'd,  
And boundless grace to man reveal'd.  
Fix'd on this basis, fair and high,  
His church may every foe defy.

Against him hell shall rage in vain,  
Nor time, nor death, shall end his reign;  
When time and death no more are known,  
Eternity shall build his throne.

HYMN

## HYMN XIV.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

**F**ATHER of all! where shall we find  
A temple suited to thy praise?  
To thee, the uncreated mind,  
What worthy altar shall we raise?

We'll call a multitude around,  
And gladly seek the house of prayer;  
There thy salvation we have found,  
And still, O God! we'll seek it there.

From breast to breast the holy flame  
Shall kindle round the sacred place;  
At once we'll hymn our Father's name,  
At once we'll seek our Father's face.

Devotion loves in such a scene  
To spread her Maker's praise abroad,  
Though well she knows how poor and mean  
Her noblest notes to such a God.

In



In our own houses we will raise  
The daily hymn, the pious prayer;  
But still to give our *highest* praise,  
We'll to thy *public courts* repair.

There, Heavenly Father! condescend  
To meet us with peculiar love;  
And when the hymns of earth shall end,  
We'll give thee nobler hymns above.

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HYMN XV.

ON THE FEAR OF GOD.

**B**LEST is the man who fears the Lord;  
His well-establish'd mind,  
In every shifting scene of life  
Shall true composure find.

The helm of nature he's convinc'd  
Both power and wisdom guide,  
And by eternal love he sees  
Her every want supplied.

Oft

Oft through the deep and stormy sea,  
The heavenly footsteps lie,  
But on a glorious scene beyond  
His faith can fix its eye.

Dark may his present prospects be,  
And sorrows round him dwell ;  
But hope can whisper to his soul,  
That all shall issue well.

Full in the presence of his God,  
Through every scene he goes,  
And, fearing him, no other fear  
His dauntless bosom knows.

No dangers can his soul appal,  
No gloomy views affright,  
For faith assures his humble heart,  
“ Whatever is, is right.”

HYMN

## HYMN XVI.

## HARVEST REFLECTIONS.

**G**REAT God! as seasons disappear,  
And changes mark the rolling year;  
As time, with rapid pinions flies,  
May all that passes make us wise!

Long has thy favour crown'd our days,  
And summer shed again its rays;  
No deadly cloud our sky has veil'd,  
No blasting wind our path assail'd.

The harvest months have o'er us roll'd,  
And fill'd our fields with waving gold;  
Our tables spread, our garners stor'd!  
Where are our hearts, to praise the Lord!

Forbid it, Source of Light and Love!  
That hearts and lives should barren prove!  
With rapid wing each season flies,  
May every season make us wise!

G g

The



The moral harvest comes apace,  
 The closing day of life and grace :  
 Time of decision ! awful hour !  
 Around, it let no tempest lower !

Prepare us, Lord ! by grace divine,  
 Like stars in heaven to rise and shine ;  
 Then shall our happy souls above  
 Reap the full harvest of thy love.

---

HYMN XVII.

ON MODERATION.

**L**ET all around you see  
 How mod'rate and how fair,  
 From pride and from injustice free,  
 Your expectations are.

Let not a fullen soul  
 Disgrace religion's name,  
 Nor levity without controul,  
 Betray to sin and shame:

Let anger soon be cool,  
 With hatred none pursue,  
 But let " the law of kindness rule,"  
 In all you say or do.

When

When scandal's busy tongue  
Is eager to defame,  
Concur not with the harsher throng,  
But shield the absent name.

Judge not a brother's creed;  
To you it is not given,  
With voice infallible, to read  
The sentences of heaven.

Let penitence and prayer  
Your own defects bewail,  
And daily watchfulness prepare,  
For joys which never fail.

---

### HYMN XVIII.

ON EARLY PIETY.

**S**WEET as the hour which day-light  
brings,

When morning waves its dewy wings;  
Sweet as the odour flowers exhale,  
When first they float along the vale:

So sweet is youth, when early given  
A morning sacrifice to heaven.  
Jehovah deigns, so prophets tell,  
To approve and love the offering well.

If with our God our days begin,  
 A guard is gain'd from future sin;  
 And as through life we move along,  
 Preserving grace will make us strong.

Safe is the youth who fears to go  
 Where vice's gaudy roses blow  
 But, as in God's own book he reads,  
 In virtue's narrow path proceeds.

Religion takes his willing hand,  
 And leads him through a goodly land,  
 Gives him a crown, and bids him shine  
 In ornaments of grace divine.

And mark! how on the bed of death,  
 The dying faint resigns his breath;  
 For, like the sun's departing ray,  
 He brightens as he sinks away!

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### HYMN XIX.

ON SUBMISSION TO AFFLICTIVE DIS-  
 PENSATIONS.

**T**HE sovereign Lord of all,  
 Who can destroy or save,  
 May, if he please, his gifts recall,  
 "He takes but what he gave."

If



If thus his righteous will  
To deal with us ordain,  
While the bereaving stroke we feel,  
Let not a thought complain.

Wisdom and love unite  
In forming every plan,  
Nor can the spring of truth and right  
Do wrong to sinful man.

A cov'nant he has made  
With those that fear his name,  
And that shall cause, in death's dark shade,  
A lamp of joy to flame.

Lord! let affliction come,  
If so thy will decree;  
Hope shall support through all the gloom,  
And lead us on to thee!

Before us may we hear  
The Saviour's cheering voice,  
And we will dry up every tear,  
And bid our hearts rejoice,

## HYMN XX.

## ON TIME.

**S**WIFT as the rapid torrent flows,  
Or arrows shot from Indian bows,  
Swift as the lightning cleaves the sky,  
So swiftly do our moments fly.

Where are we now? what have we done?  
Since we the race of life begun?  
And should succeeding days be given;  
What can we do for earth or heaven?

Each moment as it disappears,  
Against, or for us, witness bears;  
And each in judgment's awful day,  
Will give us comfort or dismay.

Our hearts and all our actions lie  
Uncovered to the eternal eye,  
Nor place nor station can afford  
A shelter from a righteous Lord.

Nor

Nor power nor wealth our lives can save,  
When God commands us to the grave;  
And shall we on sin's altar burn  
Those moments which will ne'er return!

Great Fountain both of life and time!  
Fill us with hopes and aims sublime,  
Wean us from earth, and lead us on  
Where our divine Redeemer's gone.

Our breasts with holy ardour fire,  
His sacred image to acquire;  
Complete in him, to Thee we'll raise  
The anthem of unceasing praise.

---

### HYMN XXI.

HUMAN MORTALITY CONSIDERED.

'TIS not in vain that man is made,  
Though life be brief and frail;  
Though frequent cares his peace invade,  
And death conclude the tale.

Existence in itself is bliss,  
And num'rous are the flowers  
Which, blooming round, perfume our peace,  
And cheer our transient hours.



'Tis not in vain that man is made,  
If, e'er he quit his place,  
He teach, in virtue's path, to tread,  
A new and rising race.

His body, fram'd by heavenly skill,  
Proclaims his Maker's power ;  
His mind, a nobler product still,  
Bids us his name adore.

'Tis not in vain that man is made,  
Though bounded by the tomb,  
For there are worlds which never fade,  
There is a life to come.

There shall the sons of virtue shine  
In glory's bright array ;  
And breathe the air of love divine  
In one eternal day.

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*FINIS.*

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